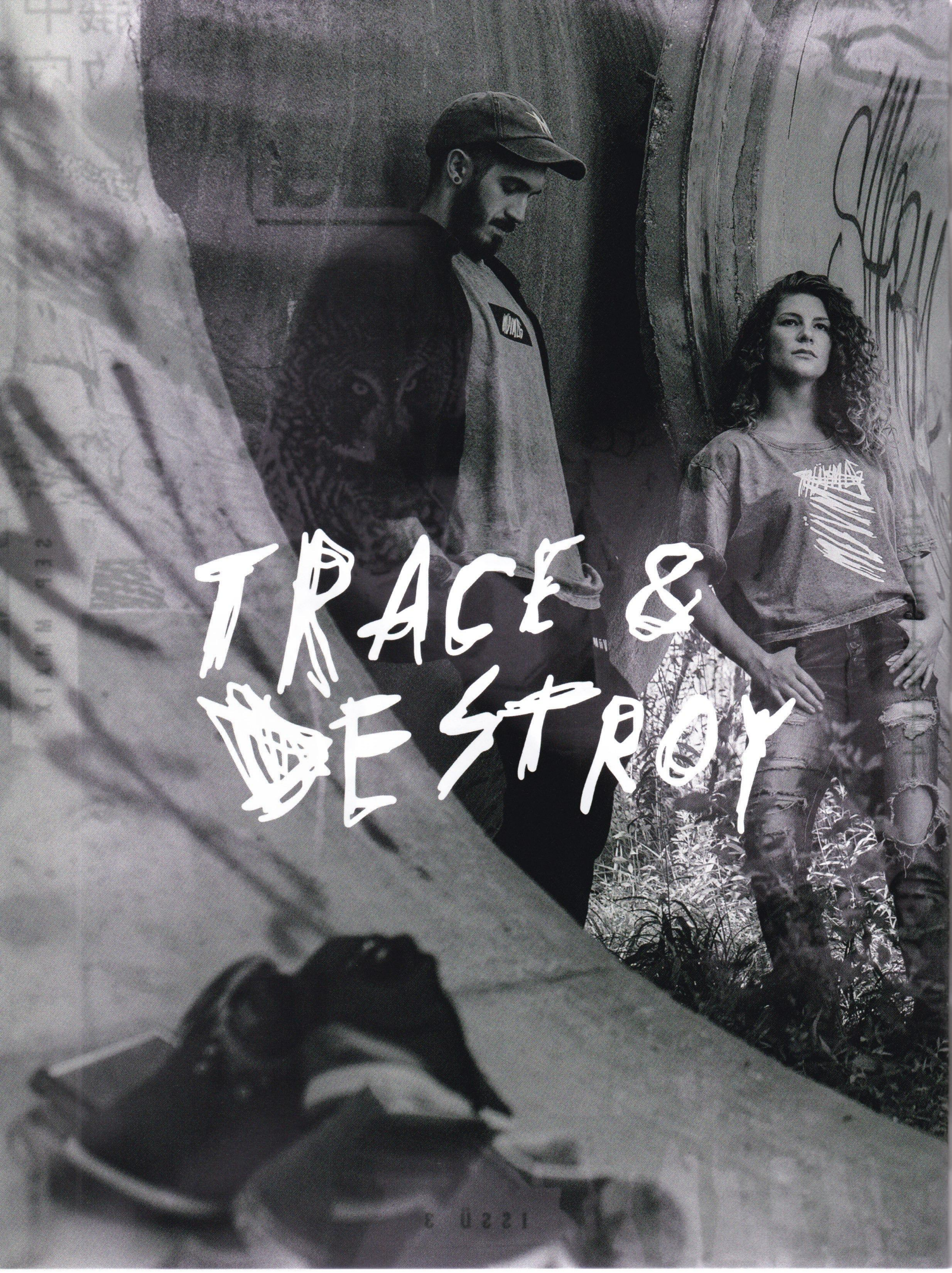
MÜVMAG

PARKOUR CULTURE

SEP MMXIX

ISSÜ 3


TRACE &
DESTROY

MÜV MAGAZINE

PARKOUR CULTURE

ISSÜ 3

MUVMAG.COM

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~~FROM THE TEAM~~

ANDREW OBENREDER | FOUNDER OF MÜVMAG

We knew we would make it here, and we were sure of it - but damn, who knew this one would be as fucking hard.

ISSÜ #1 was the first of its kind, and we knew we had to put in the work to make it something special, but like many firsts, it was riddled with flaws and elementary school-sized paragraph font.

ISSÜ #2 was a massive step in the right direction, but still was a test for how we wanted the magazine to look. And while it got us closer to that vision, it still had many issues to fix.

This one holds a special place in my heart. I connect with the content in these pages more than I have any other. On top of that, the release date just so happened to coincide with my birthday and the autumnal equinox. Pretty rad.

Now this beast, and I mean a fucking monster (I haven't gotten actual sleep in nearly two weeks), ISSÜ #3, is getting us where we want to be while further away from that destination. This edition pays homage to the visual style found in the OWLS GANG - Delinquents, and while we will move forward with some of the elements of this ISSÜ, the bright colors must go. Save them for the photographs.

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Ⓐ BUNCHA F**CK IN'

THAT'S A FUCKIN' "U"

OWLS GANG

LOUENT7

STORY
BY
ANDREW
OBENREDER

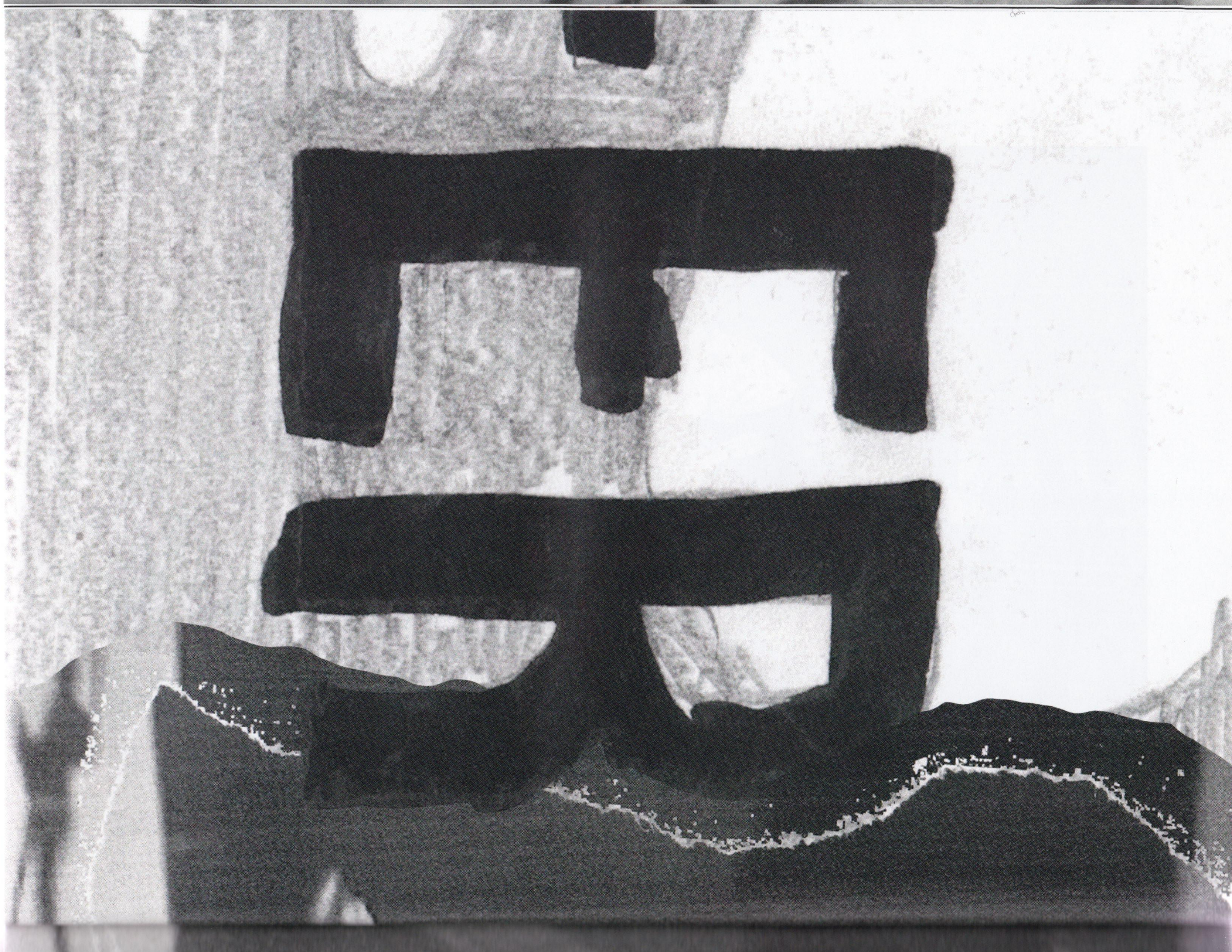
PHOTOS 'N SHIT BY
SOME BLOKE
FRAZER DEMPSEY

WITH THE RELEASE OF THEIR RECENT VIDEO DELINQUENTS, OWLS GANG PARLIAMENT HAS DONE WHAT FEW IN PARKOUR HAVE BEEN ABLE TO ACHIEVE OVER THE YEARS:

MAKE AN INSTANT CLASSIC

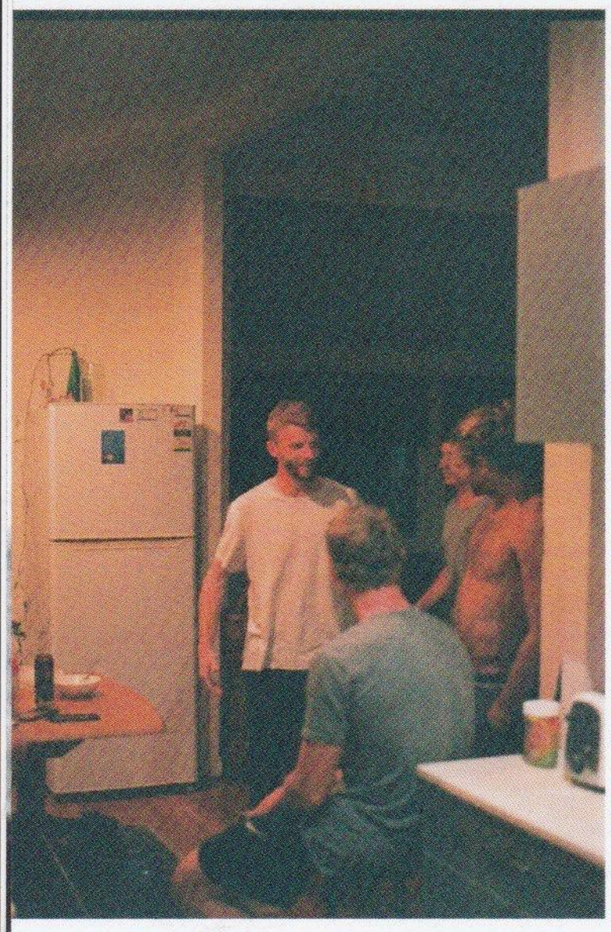
ONCE AGAIN, WITH THE HELP OF TRAVELING VIDEO ARTIST, FRAZER DEMPSEY, OWLS GANG WAS ABLE TO CREATE AN ACTION-PACKED CONCOCTION, BREWED TOGETHER WITH THE FINEST VICTORIA BITTER, HAND-ROLLED DEBAUCHERY, AND THE SPIRIT OF PARKOUR — BEAUTIFULLY CAPTURED WITH THE HIGHEST QUALITY ANALOG POTATO THAT RESEMBLES OUR FAVORITE, EARLY 2000s PARKOUR GEMS MIXED WITH THAT SIGNATURE 90s SKATE VIBE.

I BOTH UNDERSTAND AND
AM PEPLEXED ON HOW
FRAZ & THESE DELINQUENTS
WERE ABLE TO ENCAPSULATE
THE FLEETING SOUL OF PARKOUR
IN 4:59 — BUT THEY
FUCKIN' DID.



OI! HOW ARE WE?

yeah, we're good, mate.



BECAUSE YOU KICKED THINGS OFF IN DELINQUENTS ROLLING THE PUNCHES, WHT DID YOU DO TOBY DIRTY LIKE THAT?

DOES THIS HAVE ANYTHING TO DO WITH SOME UNRESOLVED TENSION REGARDING AUSTRALIA'S HISTORICAL TIES TO BRITAIN?

Honestly, could have been Toby, could have been the Queen, we weren't going to stop once we had started. His back injury wasn't going to change a thing.

SO FOR THOSE WHO DON'T KNOW, WHO THE F*CK IS DWLS GANG PARLIAMENT?

The collective noun for owls is a Parliament, and we're a gang. It started as a joke back in 2012. The people involved have changed a bit over time, although Sam and Max have always sort of been around. Nowadays we've got a pretty big family, most are from Australia, but a few legends from around the world too. We don't get many chances to meet up, but when we do, we try to make a video. Check out who we follow on Instagram for the whole crew.

& MORE IMPORTANTLY... WHY THE F*CKIN' OWL?

Owls Gang fits on your knuckles. The name was a total joke, it came about when one of the original guys, Nate, named a stuffed moose on a wall 'Peter the Owl.' Following on from th joke, we wanted to name the video we were maki Owls Parliament. But, Sam, couldn't write it on his knuckles, so we added 'gang.' The video name became Owls Gang Parliament, and it has stuck ever since. The owl was literally just the first animal Nate thought of. In the words of Tim Champion, "bit of a funny name really, hhh

SO, DELINQUENTS — EASILY ONE OF MY FAVORITE VIDEOS OF RECENT HISTORY AND AN INSTANT CLASSIC.

GIVE US THE RUNDOWN.

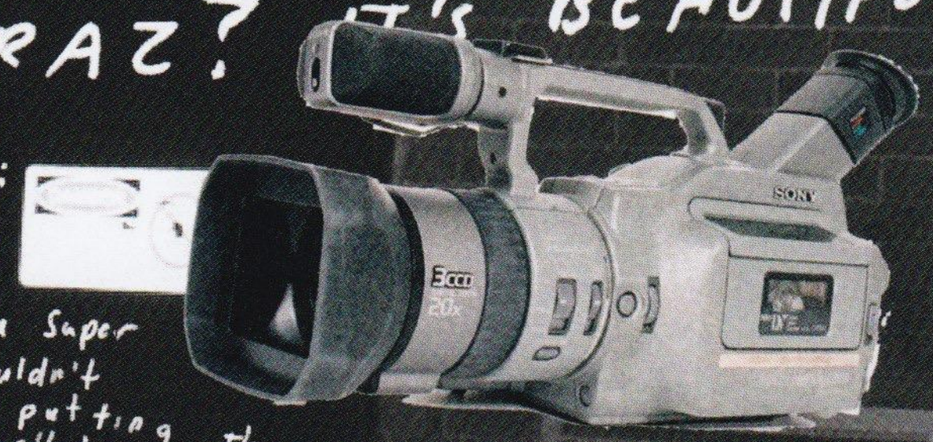
We'd done a couple video projects with Fraz before, and Delinquents was sort of a sequel to our last one Does your Mum Know you do this? The idea for that was pretty much night time gaps on shitty metal roofs (because that's all Australia's got). It was a skater style edit, filmed on an old school fisheye with a couple big floodlights. It was a sick project, and we were keen to kick it up another notch. By chance, Tim, Toby, Dom and the Pawson brothers were all in Aus and keen to get involved for this one. Fraz scoped some spots and got more old camera equipment, and we ended getting a group of about 15 at one house over about a week in Brisbane. The Brisbane boys actually got kicked out of that house afterward.

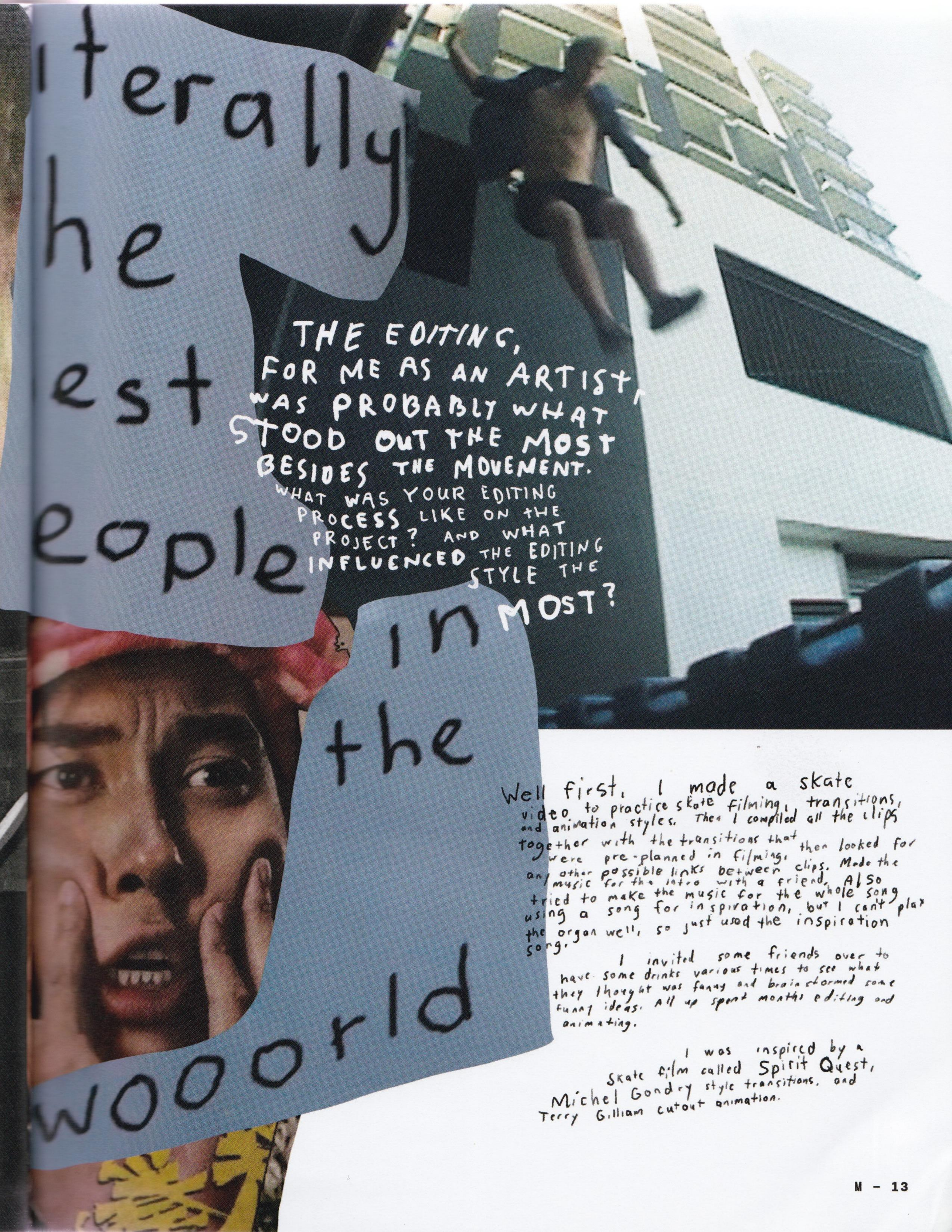
Sorry lads!

WHAT ELECTRONIC-POTATO ARE YOU CAPTURING THE WORLD WITH, FRAZ? IT'S BEAUTIFUL!

PLEASE CONTINUE.

The Classic SKate cam: SONY VX1000 with a cheap fisheye, various other MiniDV cameras, and a Super 8mm film camera, but you wouldn't know because I didn't end up putting that footage into the video. The old aesthetic is cool, and the workflow makes you think more about what you're doing, but honestly, it's really annoying technology to use.





Well first, I made a skate video to practice skate filming, transitions, and animation styles. Then I compiled all the clips together with the transitions that were pre-planned in filming, then looked for any other possible links between clips. Made the music for the intro with a friend, Also tried to make the music for the whole song using a song for inspiration, but I can't play the organ well, so just used the inspiration song.

I invited some friends over to have some drinks various times to see what they thought was funny and brainstormed some funny ideas. All up spent months editing and animating.

I was inspired by a skate film called Spirit Quest, Michel Gondry style transitions, and Terry Gilliam cutout animation.

NIKE
TOKYO

CLASSIC
ARCTERYX

WHAT WERE SOME OF YOUR FAVORITE MOMENTS DURING THE PRODUCTION OF DELINQUENTS?

It was 15 good mates from across the globe all staying in one house, throwing themselves at the concrete with hangovers, too many good moments to count. But some of the standouts were:

Fraz badly cutting his foot on the first day, defying doctors orders and running around on it all week anyway, Toby just being there, Oscar smashing a beer on his head twice for the opening shot, absolutely trashing the poor Brissy boys house, and trying to convince police/security/randoms to do one more shot like three times a day.

AND WHAT ABOUT MOVEMENT? WHAT TRULY STOOD OUT TO YOU, OR WAS THERE ANYTHING EVERYONE WAS PARTICULARLY STOKED FOR?

Will Pat-O sending it in Daisy Duke denim shorts, taking a slam off a bin, and busting three casual cat gainers straight onto concrete. That man took MVP for sure.

ANYTHING THAT DIDN'T MAKE THE CUT THAT YOU WISH HAD?

There was a 30-second clip filmed over a roughly 100m stretch of street. Tim was bombing the hill filming on a skateboard while Max, Dom, Oscar and Sam gave it the one go we had, while the other boys stopped traffic. Turned out to be too ambitous for one take. Dom was sending a real big front with a bruised heel, so fair that we only had a single take.

WHAT IS UP WITH YOU AUSSIES AND YOU'RE FUCKING HEIGHT DROPS?

What are you talking about? They're just vertical precisions.

WHAT IS THE DEAL WITH COPS AND TRAINING IN AUSTRALIA? YOU ALL SEEM TO NOT GIVE A SHIT, BUT DO THEY?

Never stopped to ask to be honest.

SO WHO'S TIM CHAMPION?

He's Big Chillin'.
He's Randy Champs.
He's got the body of a Greek god and the name of a super hero.
He became part of Owls Gang ages ago, but has since joined Storm and won heaps of skill comps and Ninja Warrior, so he is doing a lot of other sick shit.
If you're not following him, you should be.

WHO'S THE BLOKE IN THE SHORT SHORTS?

define: **larrikin**

lar·ri·kin (lăr′ĭ-kĭn)

n. Australian

A person given to comical or outlandish behavior.

1. a mischievous person
2. (as modifier): a larrikin bloke.
3. a hooligan

That's Will Paterson, AKA Pat-O, AKA Big Willy. Pat-O is a true blue **larrikin** from Perth. He became part of Owls Gang a couple of years ago and has been part of our projects since. He lives about two thousand kilometres away, so we don't get to see him that often, but when he's around, it's always a big laugh.

WHAT PROMPTED THE ARTISTIC DECISION TO USE PROP CIGARETTES AND BEER CANS, YOU KNOW, BECAUSE NO PARKOUR ATHLETE WOULD EVEN CONSIDER SMOKING OR DRINKING?

Who says we're athletes?

THAT BEING SAID; VICTORIA BITTER OR...?

whatever's going round, mate.

AND JUSTIN, HOW MANY TOBACCO PLANTS WERE MERCILESSLY SLAUGHTED IN THE MAKING OF THIS VIDEO ALONE?

Fuck man... too many.

NOW THAT ALL THE SERIOUSNESS IS OUT OF THE WAY, WHAT DO YOU FEEL ABOUT THE CURRENT STATE OF PARKOUR, AND HOW DO THE THINGS YOU CREATE AS OGP FIT INTO THAT IMAGE? IS THERE ANYTHING YOU'RE HOPING TO CHANGE WITH YOUR INVOLVEMENT WITHIN PARKOUR?

Parkour's at a sweet time where everyone can feel the cultural shifts, and we can see the rapid progress of the movement. There's definitely a few shitty trends caused by the click-bait internet world we live in, but it's sick to see the real stuff still coming through. At the end of the day, parkour will keep being sick as long as people are genuine with their projects. We're stoked to be a part of it with so many wicked people, and add a little of what we want to see into the parkour world (recently, vx1000 skater-style edits). As Fraz became part of Owls Gang, he really pushed our creative process and kind of put it on steroids. It's taken the scale and excitement of the projects to a whole new level. To be honest, I think we're all pretty excited and curious to see what will come out in the future. We'll just keep trying to make videos that we would want to watch, and enjoy watching the rest of the parkour world evolve.

FUCK WITH FIG, OR DO THEY NEED TO GET A FUCKING HORSE?

Generally, don't have much time for old dudes in suits telling us what to do. So FIG should probably saddle up and fuck off.

DO YOU GUYS HAVE ANYTHING ELSE IN THE WORKS?

Owls Gang usually takes awhile (years) to get an idea off the ground. Fraz is working hard on a bunch of his own stuff in Europe/Asia — so keep an eye out, and we're hoping to do another big project when the stars align.

WHERE CAN I GET A SHIRT?

We honestly don't know.

DOES YOUR MUM KNOW YOU DO THIS?

Yeah, we're NOT very subtle.

FOLLOW:

@OWLSGANG
@ANDREWMUVS

AND EVERYONE THEY FOLLOW.

會法案審議中

偷偷下馬威

SADDLE UP AND

MÜVMAG PRO TEAM PROFILE

KENT JOHNS

müVS

INTERVIEW
BEAR SCHNEIDER

PHOTOGRAPHY

MICHAEL GRAEF
KENT JOHNS
MICAH MARINO

So who are you, and what do you do?

My name is Kent Johns. I am a parkour athlete, gym owner, and photographer and videographer in the parkour sphere.

What got you into parkour?

I remember when I was 14, my close friend Mike and I were shown a video by his dad. His dad found David Belle's Speed Air Man, and he was like "Oh look at this guy, he has mad skills," and I was like "Jesus Christ that is like the coolest thing I've ever seen, I need to go do this." So I went down to the local playground and started jumping off stuff. From there I just started watching a ton more Youtube videos, you know, like Crazy Russian Climbers and all the classics, and just started trying to replicate all the moves we saw on the playground.

The first time I ever heard the word parkour was on The Office, which is unfortunate.

Some of the guys here also found it from The Office. It's always such a cool question to ask because everyone has a different story. Most of the people I talk to that started around the same time I did say very similar things. Most everyone who's been training for right around ten years says they got it from Russian Climbers and stuff like that, all of those videos, I remember a whole subset of people who saw Jump City Seattle, like Nate. Just like Ultimate Parkour Challenge, there's a whole generation from those shows. It's so interesting to see like where on the timeline people are. I remember those things coming out and being an athlete and being like "Oh, these are cool, these will be some kid's first." I dunno, maybe one kid is gonna see one of my videos, or a Motus video or a Storm video and that's their very first sight in parkour. It could be the biggest thing ever.

It's so interesting thinking about how I don't remember exactly the first movement I saw, but the first time I heard the word parkour I already knew what it was and had already taught myself how to roll, and being like "That's not parkour, that's called freerunning!"

Oh god. I got yelled at on Reddit the other day because I tagged a post as parkour and it had more than 20% freerunning. I was like, this is the most archaic shit I've ever seen in my life, like what year is it? I feel like this is gonna be very generalizing, but I feel like it's all just internet kids, not people that are just out there doing it.

Yeah, it's unfortunate. It also just pushes away the people that are serious about it.

Yeah, it's just not the right avenue I don't think. I was also talking to somebody else about this, since the vast majority of the community has moved away from just being active online and actually started going to events and stuff, I feel like we've finally gotten past that, but seeing that stuff online just blows my mind.

(Throughout all of the last answer, Kent was interrupted by hammering and power tools) Are you at the gym right now?

Yeah, I am.

What is going on in there?

Micah is currently building out the new section of the gym. We were closed for the last two weeks to get the gym more filled out, and as always, it took longer than expected and isn't quite done yet. Just trying to get some new structures done.

Is this your first gym space, or did you have another space before?

This is technically our second gym, we kind of had three gym spaces. We started at a gymnastics gym just teaching a parkour class, eventually, they weren't able to insure our program anymore, so they said: "You can either create your own company, and we can let you rent space, or you guys should just quit and go do something else." I was like, okay, I guess we'll just make our own company and go for it. The guys I had already been training with, we already talked about eventually doing a parkour gym, but I was 17 at the time and still in high school. I was always like "I'll finish school, and I'll go to college and get my life together, and I'm guessing more when I'm like 30 I'll come back and open a gym somewhere." And that was the general timeline I had in my head, then it was just, yeah well you've got to either do it now or don't do it. So we just kind of went for it, and that's when we made Unparalleled and started renting space from them. After a while, we started running out of space, so we built a little pallet park out behind the gym and taught some summer camps out there and saved some money. Eventually, we opened up our first gym space which was like five minutes away from where we are currently, in an industrial area. We were sharing space with another gymnastics gym, they just hadn't built out their whole building yet, so we agreed to rent space from them for a few years. We had that space from early 2013 until the end of 2016 and kind of had a fiasco with moving buildings, and we were closed for about a year, but at the end of 2017, we opened this space.

That's wild, I didn't realize it was that new. Your gym is definitely one of those gyms that, in videos, looks massive but in person is not that huge and it doesn't look like you have too many modular obstacles, so how do you keep it interesting in there?

We've always kind of done our gyms in a progressive build-out, we've never opened a space and built out the whole gym and been like "Okay, this is the gym." We'll continuously add on to it so every so often there's new stuff, even if it's like nonmobile stuff. We do have a number of mobile obstacles that will change locations every week or two. It'll kind of rejuvenate a section of the gym if we move some of the larger obstacles. Doing that every so often keeps it fresh.

That's awesome. I really like all of your structures, the overall look of the gym is so clean and sleek, good job on that.

That's definitely exactly what we were going for. So many gyms, not trying to single out the parkour community here, but like workout gyms in general, just look kind of grungy and dirty and nasty. We just wanted to have a space that doesn't feel that way.

That's been my experience with parkour gyms. That definitely made a huge difference to be able to walk into one and be like "Damn, this looks clean." So moving away from the gym a little bit, what is your athletic background? What did you do before parkour, if anything?

I grew up playing a lot of organized sports, mainly baseball but I played some soccer as well. I had also been skiing my whole life, since I was 2. But around 12, I got into ski racing and raced for about 7 or 8 years, up until my junior year of high school. I got into parkour around the end of my 8th-grade year and my freshman year of high school. I was doing skiing and parkour for a while, until I decided that I wanted to just do parkour instead. It's really all I cared about doing anymore, so I gave up ski racing, and I've just been training since.

Nice, how long have you been training for?

As of August, it'll have been 11 years.

Okay, so you're about 25 now, that's pretty much about the same timeline as me, except I didn't start a gym when I was 17! (laughs)

Yeah, definitely not what I expected myself doing but I'm glad I'm where I am. I remember very distinctly when I was 15, I say this like it's a very rare occurrence, I had the very conscious thought that I knew that parkour was going to be what I did as a career in some form. I didn't have any knowledge of what I was going to do or how I was going to make it happen, but I just had that realization that "This is what I have to do. There's nothing else like this, it's going to happen, I don't want to do anything else except for this" I feel like having that clear cut of an epiphany in my head, I don't know if a lot of people go through that or not, but it was very interesting moment for me, and I remember it very fondly. Here I am like 10 years later actually doing it, it's cool.

So we established that you started a gym at 17, which is a huge undertaking as a 17-year-old. And now at 25, people see Kent Johns, and they know you for taking pictures, owning a gym, running Fool's Jam, and making videos, so how do you manage balancing all of your businesses and hobbies...if you do?

I think that is the question of my life, I feel like that's been the single hardest thing for me to manage, and that has been one of my main focuses of the last year. Over the last three or four years really, but I've been trying to have a more conscious approach to it over the last year. It's really difficult because a lot of times it just feels like there are so many different things to do, it just gets overwhelming to the point where I've had a lot of mental health issues related to that balance.

I have a lot of anxiety and stress when it comes to productivity and not getting enough done, and when I'm not getting enough done, I'll beat myself up over it and not want to do anything because I'm feeling down, and then I'm not doing anything, and I'll get even more mad at myself because I wasted more time not doing anything. It's just this crazy fucking spiral. That year we were closed, it totally consumed my life. It's definitely gotten better, but I still have to struggle with that. Life balance between all of those things is something I've really had to work on, I feel like this year has been the best it's been so far, I really like where things are going. I feel like one of the most important things is that we've created such a strong team here, and just having more people to get feedback from, having that support is just so important.

Do you feel that there's any specific thought process that helps you sort out and better prioritize things, or do you just go for the most pertinent thing that needs doing?

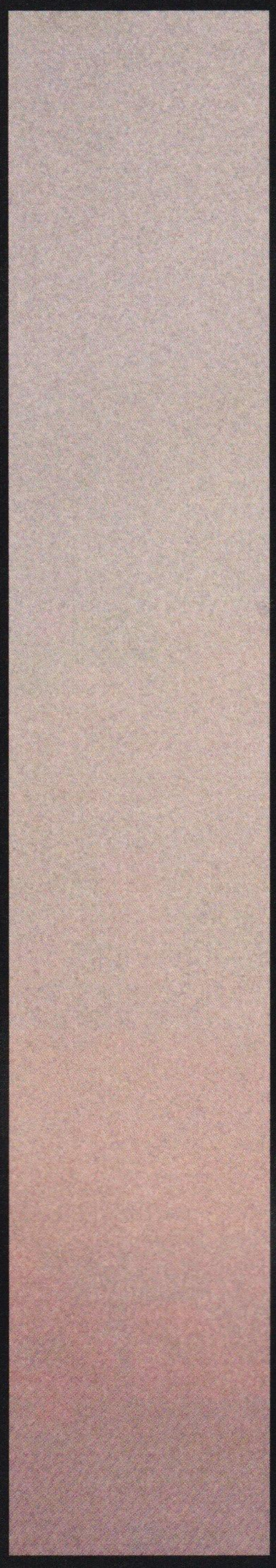
I like to do my best to keep things organized and be like "Here's where I want to be in the next year," and then go backwards from there. It's a lot messier, things end up taking a lot more time, and new stuff will pop up, so a lot of times it's dealing with what's most pressing, especially with how day to day gym stuff goes. I'm trying to be better at keeping those milestones in my head and what I need to do to take steps toward them. I think that helps me stay on track as far as not getting sucked into too many different projects that aren't really worth the time. With so many things going on, time is limited so you can't do everything, that's the reality of it, so I'm choosing to do the things that are going to make the largest impact over the shortest amount of time.

So building off of putting together a good team, your community is kind of known everywhere. I just watched the Fools Jam 2019 video where Tim Champion was like "I knew I had to make it out here at some point," so it's even affecting basically the rest of the world of parkour to some degree. When I showed up at Missoula, I was like "This is not a huge city."

It's a 70,000 person town. Not only talking about town sizes and stuff like that, like this town is this size, and the town right next to it is also big, and the other connecting towns are also big, that's not how it works in Montana. We're literally in a valley surrounded by mountains, so there's nowhere for those other towns to go, so you get to the edge of town, and it's just mountains and nothing. There are no other towns to pull from. It's just such a nowhere place to most people. Which I understand, it's very off in the corner, we barely have a million people in the state, and it's like the 4th largest state. It's something like 8 people per square mile, it's pretty wild.

We're looking at opening a second location in Spokane Valley, and that area has like six different towns. Even though the population is in like a smaller area, there's so much more reach. So yeah, Missoula is not a big place. That was the biggest fear I had going in to making the gym: Can our small ass town have the clientele that is actually interested? It's worked out so far, we're also a very outdoor and activity-centered town, so I think we lucked out in that sense. As far as the community aspect goes, that's something we've just been working on for so long. It's been such a key component of the success of where we are. A lot of times trying to look at it from an outside perspective makes it seem pretty crazy, that it seems like a random ass place to have one of the most stacked communities in the country. It's so weird, but it's so cool, and I'm so proud of what we've been able to create here with all of these cool people around me.

It seems like you guys hit a goldmine in making your Missoula a hotbed for traveling athletes, and even the athletes that live there. What do you think you've done to create such a strong community that sticks out internationally?



You have to strike a balance between both building the local community as well as finding recognition internationally. I've been going to events and being present in larger jams and events for most of my training. The first major event I went to was Colorado National Jam in 2011, and I've been consistently going to events since. I've just been representing this community for a long time and going to those things so I can meet people and build that name. That's just one aspect, so at least people know it exists. I'll go to events tell people I'm from Montana and they'll say, "People do shit there?" I remember specifically at the San Fran International jam in 2012, somebody was like "Where are you from?" and I was like "Oh I'm from Montana," and they were like "So it really is an international jam!" I don't know if they were joking or not, it didn't seem like they were joking, but damn dude, that just feels bad. (laughs)

It's a balance between building the name and fostering a really positive and accepting community, so all of our students and everybody that comes in the door feels very welcome no matter what skill, ability, age, or whatever. It's really important that the people that are at the top are really accepting to all of the new kids coming in. It creates such an interesting atmosphere whenever a 7-year-old can come into the gym and be like oh my gosh that's Nate Weston, and Nate's just a really chill person who's down to chat and just be a human with them. That's when that creates such a lasting effect and can do so much good for those kids as far as making them want to become better athletes, and it just really keeps that positivity cycle. We have a bunch of top athletes, and a bunch of teen athletes that come up and really look up to them, and the younger kids look up to them, and when you foster that positivity you feel it trickle down and everybody gets to benefit from that.

The final pillar of building a strong community is merging the two together, which is having events at the gym like Fool's Jam, where the local community and the international community all come intermingle. We strive to make those events as fun and exciting as possible so people can come to Missoula have a really good time and see what we're all about. I think that creates those powerful memories that make what we do very unique.

That's definitely one of those events that I see the most hype for on social media circles, and it looks like you guys really go all out. I was watching the 2019 video and noticed that you had a camera crane in the back. Why put in so much money and effort?

We honestly got lucky this year in that we had some connections that ended up getting us some pretty solid sponsors for the event. That crane ended up being part of the package that we got, so we thought we might as well take advantage of all of the cool shit we can use. We had a full crew just to run the live stream. They weren't here as athletes or anything, they didn't do parkour, they were like completely separate. They were only here to set up, run, and produce the live stream and just make it as good of a product as it could be. I'm super thankful for that because it just gave me more room to help make more parts of the event much higher quality. It was us kind of trying to prove that parkour events can get bigger. This last year was a proof of concept that we can put on a really big event and go all out, and the reception to it was just incredible and I'm just so proud of how it turned out.

It was really cool to be able to see that, and it's not like the gym wasn't packed, but how many people were there exactly?

My best guess was somewhere between 80 and 100.

Not to shit on it, but having the same number of people as like a middle school soccer game and still being able to have such a high quality of production speaks volumes of the lengths you're willing to go to push parkour forwards, I think that was really cool and didn't go unnoticed.

Thanks, it's definitely just us trying to prove that there's value in it and as it scales, it can keep getting better and better. It's just like, hey, we can do this, so let's keep putting in the effort. I have some ideas for some really exciting events here that we haven't really touched on, just like big, more public-facing competitions, a la Airwipp. Fool's Jam is awesome, it makes a lot of traction within the parkour community, but I want to make more things that will create waves outside the community, to where it's basically impossible to ignore if you live in Missoula. That's the goal, like you can't ignore what we're doing, and that's the size of events I'm trying to get us towards.

That's fucking sick, I really look forward to seeing and hearing more about that. That'll be awesome. Moving away from the parkour stuff a little bit, tell me more about your photography.

Parkour was more or less my introduction to cameras, the moment we started training I was like "Let's take some videos, they're gonna suck ass," and I made something like a dozen youtube videos somewhere within the first six months of training. They're all still out there, so if anyone wants to go make fun of me, you can go find those. There's so much cringe content, but I never want those to get deleted because they have so much history and value to me.

Anyways, parkour just got me starting to use cameras. I feel like everyone has that one teacher in school that just gets it. In high school, there was this teacher that taught all of the tech and computer classes. I had her for five or six classes for my last couple years of high school when I did multiple graphic design and filmmaking courses, and she really solidified my love to create things using cameras. Then at the very end of 2014, I broke my leg for the first time, and at that point, I was just like, "I'm going to lose my mind if I don't have some kind of creative outlet." So I decided to take photography a lot more seriously, and us as much energy as I would put into parkour and put that into trying to get really good at shooting photos videos.

For the next like three years, I heavily delved into that, and it kept my energy and interest while I had parkour on the backburner.

We'll come back to the leg thing in a bit, but I saw that you actually hosted a gallery in the gym a couple days ago, right? How did that go? What was the motive behind that? What did you show?

I've done like five galleries before, but it's all like most of my outdoor and lifestyle work, and I was starting to get kind of sick of it. I was decided I wasn't going to do another gallery again unless it was a project. It was always like "here's my work," and it was never like "I made this project with this intent, and here's me at the end presenting it." I was like, "How cool would it be to do something that involved parkour?" I just wanted to give myself a challenge and kind of take an avenue that I hadn't taken yet.

FEATURED - **NATE WESTON** @NATE_WESTON

I contacted Casey Wilson at the beginning of the year, and I was like "Hey, I had the idea of doing a parkour gallery, but entirely on film." Because I think that would be a cool medium. You know, parkour has this raw, in the moment grittiness, I feel like film photography would be a very cool way to experience that. It's just as-is. I thought it would be a really cool challenge to push myself in a direction that I hadn't done a whole lot of yet, and so we shot a bunch of film images all year, and he came up here last week and we got to show those off. It was cool, but we should have chosen a different venue because the gym itself a little bit out of downtown, and I did it on the first Friday. On first Fridays, there are just a ton of art galleries downtown, and people just wander around and have fun and look at art drink and whatnot. It was kind of out of that route, so we didn't get quite as many people as I was hoping, so I think I'm going to try to get another showing next month or sometime soon just to get more people outside of parkour seeing it. But yeah, I just thought it was a cool way to express parkour, I hadn't really seen that before in an art gallery. I just wanted to push that into a new medium. I don't expect a ton of people to do it, I just thought it would a unique and fun way to show parkour off in a different light.

Absolutely, people are used to seeing the general consumer parkour video content, whether it's like the big parkour brand names or just the parkour fail videos. I feel like, as something that a lot of people call an "art form" or "art of movement," there's a serious lack of artistic diversity. It's dope that you're expanding on that.

I just think parkour has such a heavy culture to it too, I want to help portray that more because it's a lot different than other sports. I feel like a lot of that is lost to the general public as well because they just see that you're just crazy people doing crazy stuff I like showcasing the culture behind it because I think that's what makes parkour special.

I agree, that's really awesome. Speaking of, you were a photographer at NAPC this year, what was that gig like? That's deep in the parkour culture.

That was super fun. I shot a little bit of the event last year and had a lot of fun doing it, so I approached Tom and Res about just trying to help out some way this year. About a week before the event, Tom reached out to me and said there were a couple of options of where they need support for the event, like gimbal operators and stuff like that. I was like "I'm gonna be straight with you, I really just want to do photos, and that's what's gonna be the most fun for me, and that's where I'm the most valuable. If you need me to do this other stuff, I will happily do it, but honestly, I just wanna come up and take a bunch of photos." And they were like yeah, just take photos, because you're going to do it anyways.

FEATURED – **NATE WESTON** @NATE_WESTON **TOM COPPOLA** @TOMJUMPS
MICAH MARINO @MICAHMARINO **CALLEE** @CALLEEAMOS
SKYLER CANNON @SCLARCANYONE

That's dope, I feel like if they chose anybody for that job, it should be you. I actually went back and watched the 2014 stream and saw you in it, and I was like holy shit, I didn't know Kent competed, that's wild!

Yeah, I competed that year. The formats have changed so much since then, skill is entirely new, it's a totally different structure now. It's improved so much, it's so crazy just over the last five years how much improvement there has been. I definitely am not opposed to competing again in the future, maybe next year. We'll see.

Yeah? That's exciting, what would you compete in?

That's a good question. I've been asked that multiple times, I'm not even sure. Like, skill seems like the most fun, but I dunno. I might just try everything out again and see how it goes.

I look forward to seeing you out there again.Moving on to some of your video stuff, I watched Oceanside for the first time the other day, and I loved it. It was good vibes, for lack of a better word. You captured a feeling very well, and I'm sure that's what you were going for. Tell me a little more about the intention and the process behind that video.

Thank you so much. Yeah, that was a fun one. That totally was the intention, I've had a few people say the exact same thing, so I feel like I did my job correctly. I don't think the intention was all that deep, I just wanted to go have a trip where the only focus was to hang out with my friends and shoot a parkour video. I really have fun when it's actually shooting to make a video, and it's not like hey we're gonna go out and train, and we might shoot some stuff and then eventually we'll make a video with it. It's like, let's show up, and every day we'll go out and try to make the video as cool as we can. It's stripping away everything else, and the only intention is to narrow in on this one thing and focus on that for the week, and I think that whole process is fun.

I have a lot more fun working on project-based videos where I have this concept, and I just wanna go do this and complete it. It's just much more interesting, in my opinion. Stuff like the video Kie and Ed did, Light Work, that was so cool. It was a very unique and totally conceptual thing, not even your normal parkour, it's just like a cool project that's super interesting to watch. It's just so much more fun than "Hey, I did 10 hard tricks, here they are in a video."

Yeah, totally, it's way cooler than "My Summer Sampler."

Yeah, for sure. And by the time anybody reads this, we'll have our big Vancouver project out. Our whole team stayed in Vancouver for a week after NAPC was over, and we just banged out a video the whole week. I'm very excited to share that with everyone. I just finished the rough cut last night and sent it out to all the guys and there was a lot of hype, so I'm excited to get that one out there. I also have a ton of behind the scenes photos from that. They were actually a huge part of the gallery. I was like "Well I only have a little more time to shoot some stuff, and I'm going to Vancouver," so I just bought this absurd amount of film and shot like seven rolls while I was there just in that one week. So I'm going through the video, and I have behind the scenes of that shot, and that shot, and that shot, I'll probably put together a whole behind the scenes photo album from that trip that will go hand in hand with that video. I think that's a cool addition.

Oh man, that's gonna be so awesome. Were there any specific moments that stand out in your memory from shooting the Vancouver or the Oceanside videos, or any shots that you're super proud of?

One of our last days in Vancouver, we went out with Tom and he was just showing us all the spots around the city, and he was like "Oh there's this cool little roof gap over here." Everyone was just low energy that day. But, it doesn't really matter what situation we're in, if something piques Nate's interest, it's gonna happen. Nobody has done any parkour yet, it's been like two hours, no one's training at all and then Nate sees the gap and is like "Cool I'm gonna get up there," like immediately. And I'm like okay, cool, this is going down. So, we had him do it like three times and got this beautiful crisp video clip from it, and got such a cool photo from it and I'm so proud of it. It ended up being the centerpiece of my part of the gallery. I'm just really happy with how that turned out.

That sounds so surreal, I literally cannot wait to see that. I definitely want to make it to one of your galleries someday. Let's backtrack a little bit, so what is your training looking like nowadays?

It's been like fairly sporadic at the moment, between travel, and just having two weeks of the gym being closed, and building, and getting ready for fall and stuff like that, I've just been in work mode, but that's very recent. This last year has been one of my better years for training because of this huge team, and we all train together really often. Almost exactly a year ago, we had a team meeting, and we were like, "It would be sick if there were a specific time where we all got together and trained. Like twice a week, two hours, that's all we need to do. I feel like it would be a really cool environment for people to bounce off each other." Then just off-handedly, I was like "I'm just gonna film some of it," and it ended up being the whole Team Training series that we've been doing all year. That's the coolest thing, and it's the most fun that I have training. All of us getting together and it doesn't have to be a big thing. It's just hanging out and having fun. I just love training with these guys so much.

It's super cool to have that group of people there to push you and just be around, it makes such a huge difference in training. Is there anything specific you're focusing on in your movement?

Yes, I am trying to regain a lot of the skills and mentality strength I had before I got injured. It's been four or five years since I initially got injured, and I'm still dealing with a lot of the effects that are more mental than physical. A lot of things are just scarier than they used to be, or I'm just not as comfortable with certain movements. I'm also more worried about getting hurt than I used to be. Just trying to work through those things and trying to get myself to a level similar to what I was before I got injured. At the same time, it's another issue of balance because I want to be able to do all the same things, then it's also like I kind of just wanna do new stuff and just enjoy what I'm doing at the moment and not worry about that too much. Trying to strike a balance where I'm still trying to push myself a lot, but I'm just having fun and not being too critical about it.

I feel that's a relevant topic for a lot of people, because a lot of people want to min/max their training, but you have to be reminded to have fun. Especially with the circle you're in, I'm sure being around those people is like "Oh man what am I doing."

Some days I'll just be like "Oh my god dude, I'm really bad. Everyone is just so much better than I am." And then I have to stop and be like, the baseline level of skill of the people I'm surrounded with is absurd, and I can't let it get to my head too much. It's definitely a way better place to be than "I have nobody to train with."

Or being the best in your area. I guess let's just go ahead and talk about your leg, it is hard to get around. What happened?

So, I was training at Apex Denver, this was like one or two days after Thanksgiving in 2014, and I was down there training and Vinnie Coryell came up, and we were having a ton of fun. We trained for like two or three hours, just going after it, one of the most fun sessions I've had. That session itself will always be one of my favorites just because of how it felt. Anyways, I had been training for a long time, and I can't say for certain why it broke, but I was doing a drop stride to a platform and then pushing through and striding up to a ledge that was higher. It was like drop stride and really deep squat and push, then stride up to another ledge. I think it was just a combination of where the weight hit and the angle that I hit, I slightly crossed my legs on the down stride, so I guess the exact way that everything torqued, it just hit it in the wrong spot. It wasn't on the down of the stride, it was actually on the way back up. It was at the base of my stride, and I went to push through to generate power, and it just snapped under me. It's real gross. I have a security cam video of it, and it sounds like someone had a large log and just hacked it.

I didn't get surgery at the time, they just placed my leg back and casted it. I was in that cast for somewhere between four and six months and then got that off. Then almost a year later, it was August of 2015, I was out training, and I was doing a little kong pre to a rail and kind of misjudged it. I stuck my right leg up to try and block it and come down, and that heel slipped over the top, so now the rail was going for my crotch, and it hit my bad shin exactly on the breakpoint and broke it again.

Oh fuck, that's so unfortunate!

Oh, it was awful. So, that was probably the lowest I've ever been in my life. It was like, I just went through all of this, and now I have to do it all again. I was absolutely dumbfounded, like I can't believe this is happening, it doesn't feel real. It was just a nightmare come true.

But anyways that time, I ended up getting surgery, and I have about a centimeter diameter rod down my shin, and I have two screws in my shin and one in my ankle. I was out for at least two and a half years, and I wouldn't say I was healthy or training consistently until like probably the start of 2018. It's been a long road.

So that was like four years.

Yeah. But all of this year I have trained pretty consistently, and it feels good to be moving again, it makes me happy. I have some back problems that came from the healing process in my leg that I'm dealing with, which really sucks. Like my leg is fine, but I have other long-lasting problems, and it's still showing in my training.

Other than the obvious, like a metal rod in your leg and the residual stuff that comes along with that, how do you feel that injury changed you?

I mean I definitely wouldn't be so media-centric at this point because it forced me into different avenues, especially like shooting photos and stuff. I've gained new skills, so it made me kind of focus on having more things going on than being an athlete, which I'm happy for. I'm just thankful that I can train again. There was definitely a point in my life where I was like, "I might just be done." There was that possibility, it felt that long. Now that it's over, obviously I was gonna get better, but in the moment it was just so long and so daunting that I thought I might just give up on parkour. I kind of tried to disassociate for a while, like I stopped watching videos. It just wasn't helping me at all, so I just removed myself from the community and removed myself from parkour for a couple years. But, you know, I'm back, and I want to make as much of an impact on the community as I can with the time that I have. That's pretty much my goal.

So it gave you some kind of perspective on longevity and what you can do as a person.

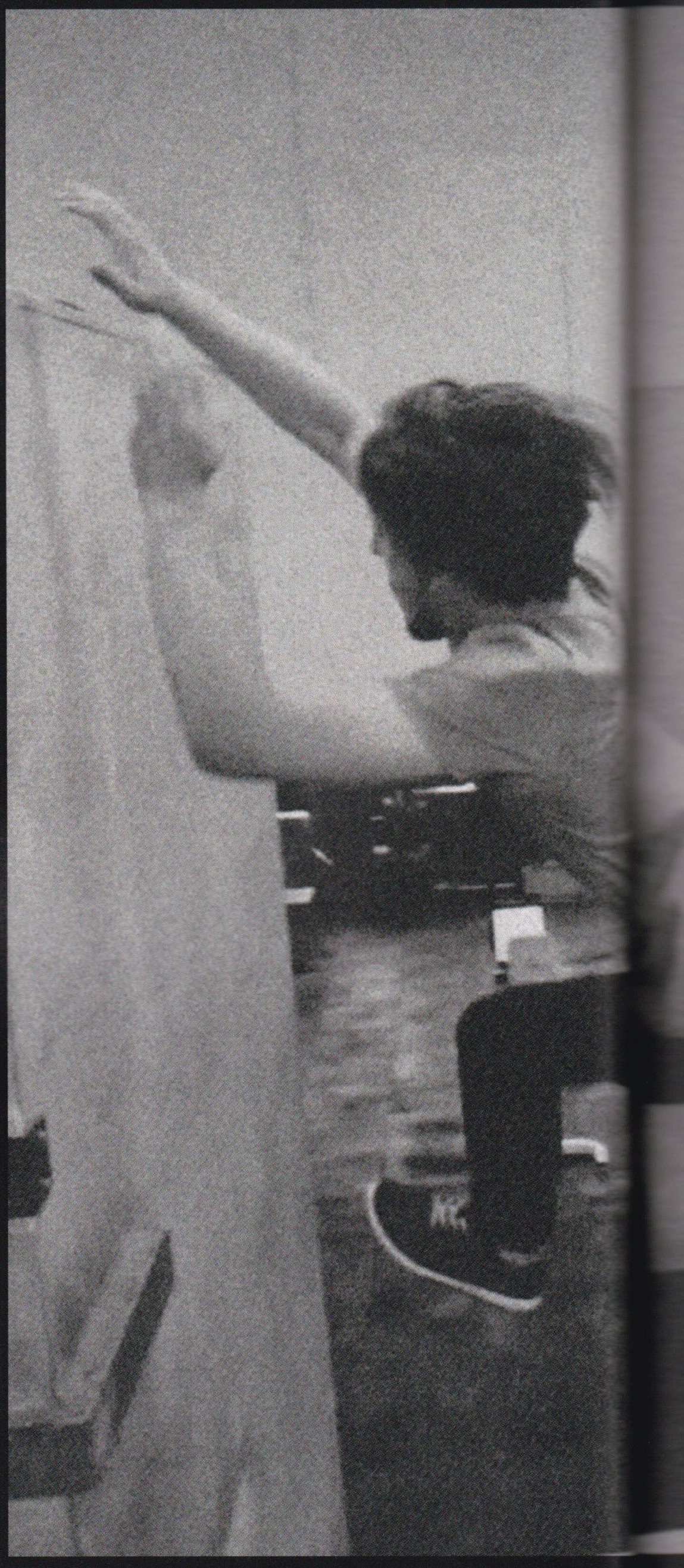
Yeah, and this past year I had a realization. For the longest time, I was like, "I want to have a career in parkour, how can I make that happen?" Likewise, with the gym, how do I make this a stable support for myself? And then realizing that I can use it to make an impact on a lot of people's lives, and that all of those people are like my best friends. What I've realized is that being able to provide for my closest friends is much more powerful than just providing for myself could ever be, and that's just so rewarding. It's lifechanging.

I think that would be helpful to hear because I know I've been there. Maybe not in the same position, but maybe there to some degree, and hearing that from somebody like you will make a huge difference to somebody that looks up to you. Maybe your students, or some of your close friends, maybe it'll make an impact in some way. I'm glad you're back, and I'm glad you're around. It's exciting to see all the dope shit you're doing and for you to be a part of the community again, and part of our team.

I'm super excited. I'm very excited to be making things and creating more videos or whatever, just keep pushing it.

So what should we be looking out for from you?

Go subscribe to the Unparalleled channel. That's where all of the top-quality projects are going. Go check that out, we have two Vancouver videos coming in the next two weeks, so that'll be the next thing on the radar.



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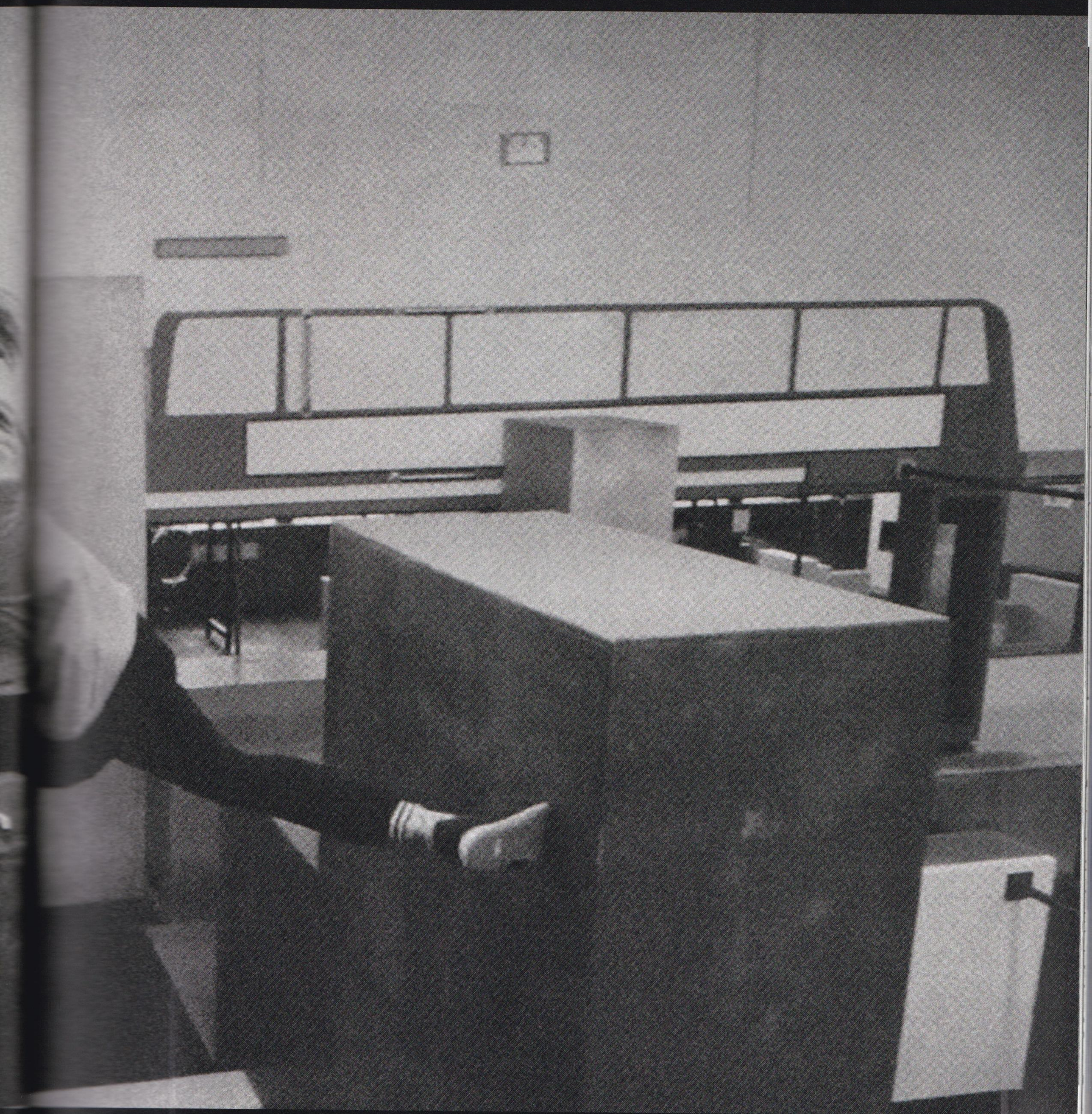


ULTRARANGE RAPIDWELD

Formerly the Van Doren Rubber Company, Vans emerged in 1966 out of Anaheim, California where they manufactured shoes on-site and sold them directly to the public. Skaters picked up the Vans #44, also known as the Authentic, in the early 70s, and the brand was then seen all over southern California. Just a few years after, famed Z-Boy skateboarders Tony Alva and Stacy Peralta designed the Vans #95 (Era), solidifying Vans within the skate world.

After the Vans Ultrarange Rapidweld was released a few years ago, they exploded in our scene, being championed far and wide as one of the best shoes for parkour. So obviously, I needed to see what was causing the hype.

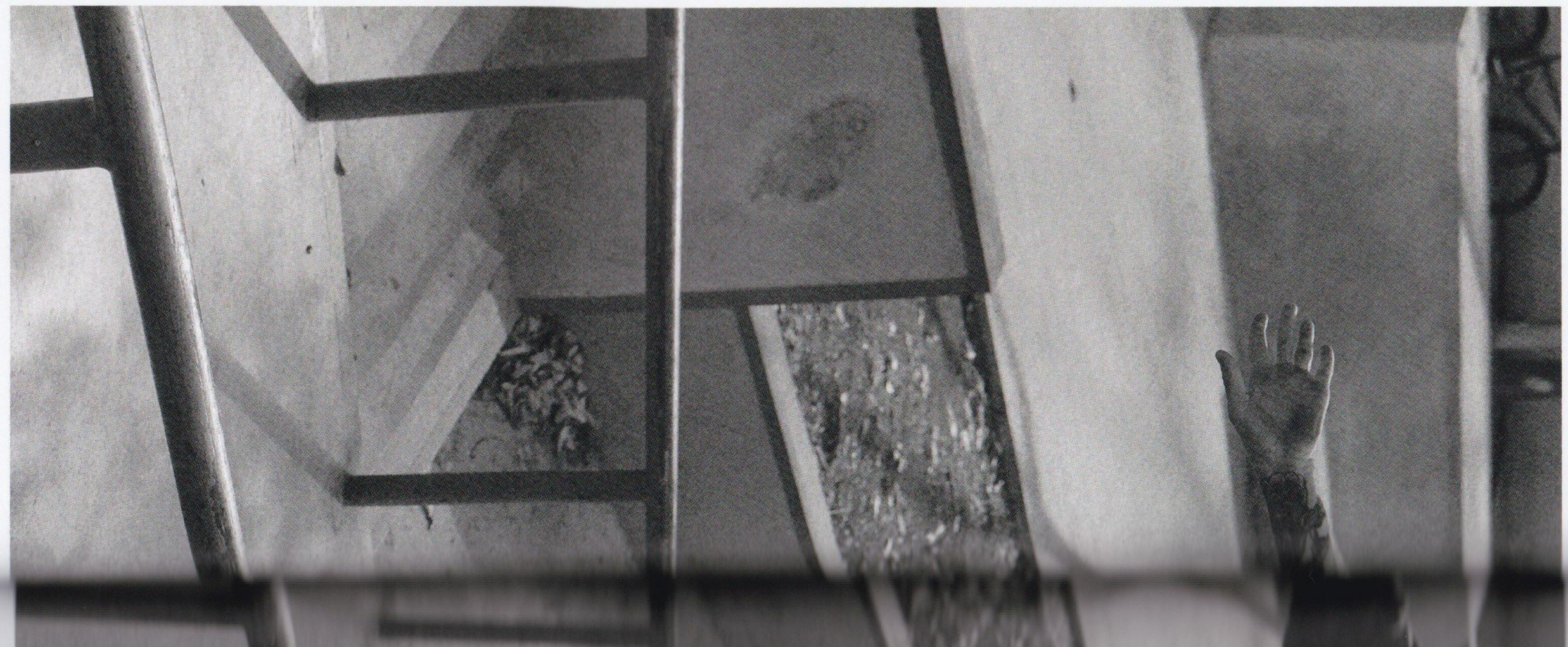
OVERVIEW The Vans Ultrarange Rapidweld is a 100% vegan (54% textile, 46% synthetic), lightweight sneaker, that comes in a low profile form with tons of color variants available.

STYLE Just like many Vans shoes, they're simplistic yet stylish. They are damn good lookers, especially from a distance, but upon closer inspection, it's easy to see all of their design flaws. Typically, those flaws include some minor stitching errors or minor staining and lighter portions of the shoe. Regardless, they are a sleek design, and like stated earlier, come in a variety of colors.

WEIGHT The first thing I noticed was how light they were even in the box. Out of the box, the Ultrarange is absurdly lightweight, and easily the lightest shoe you own, weighing in at 10oz.

GRIP The grip, although thin, and somewhat easily worn through, is a great sticker. The Ultrarange is a great all-around performer on all surfaces types except super dusty, concrete skatepark floors.

CUSHION The UltraCush Lite Midsole cushion is rather thick, but it's relatively easy to feel through for those accustomed to a thicker midsole. Even as a minimalist footwear advocate, I was surprised how much ground feel I had, all while feeling as if I were walking on clouds. Not only clouds but bouncy clouds. I felt spring-loaded as I bounded through even the largest of my strides. Heel cushioning: soft. Forefoot cushioning: soft. Everything is so damn soft. The shoe is not as stable around the heel for those who wear minimalist footwear. There is a noticeable sway during specific movements that and I feel could be a concern for possible ankle rolling.



CONSTRUCTION Construction is where the Ultrarange Rapidweld is lacking. The mesh upper, while beautifully breathable, is easily torn through. The outer sole, as mentioned previously, is thin and doesn't last as long for intensive training. I started noticing holes in the outer sole and mesh upper both around three to four months of moderately intense training. The shoe is wonderfully flexible and easily sandwiched for a tight travel pack. The shoe is narrow and fits beautifully for people with narrow feet, and the toe box is exceptionally tight. For those with a fuller foot, the toe box feels akin to foot binding (never tried it, but I imagine it's similar). Say goodbye to your natural toe spacing and operational foot biomechanics!

THE RUNDOWN The Vans Ultrarange Rapidweld are amazingly light, have an excellent grip on most surfaces, are relatively thick but have a good ground response, are incredibly comfortable, have a slender build, are lacking in terms of the overall construction, and are damn good lookers.

VANS

ULTRARANGE RAPIDWELD

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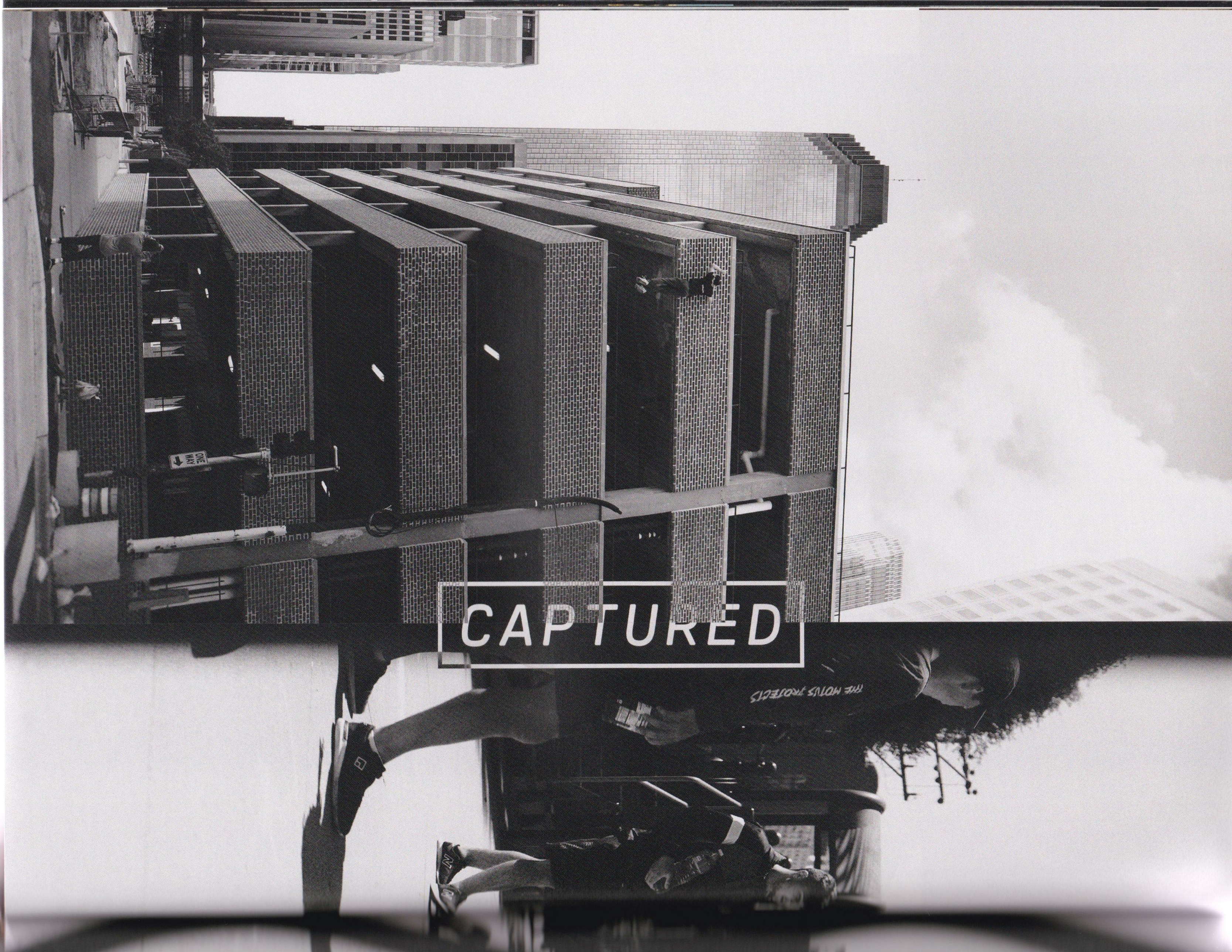
CAPTURED



CAPTURED

STORY + PHOTOS BY NOAH HEATH @NORTHSTREETBOOGIE

Sometimes we can appreciate movement even more through freezing time rather than recording it. A photo often leaves us with curiosity and can emotionally affect our state. Videos are wonderful but, there is nothing like that single moment when committing to a jump, and exactly when that tiny piece of time is captured. Whether you indulge in action sports or have done anything in your life that requires commitment, we can all relate emotionally to a photo that displays pure decisiveness.

Often times, I'd prefer the photo more than the footage because the viewer receives the opportunity to appreciate the detail and allow space for them to fill in the blanks of the story. This leaves the viewer with more of a chance to form a relationship with my work. The ultimate goal is to bring forth a feeling that the spectator can relate with, which makes it possible to visualize the rest of what happened in their imagination. A photo of a jump tells the story of a process from beginning to end with only one visual piece of evidence, yet, you are provoked to visualize the whole process.

The human body and its many shapes and forms it can exist within is art, and what more is art than a body amidst the flow state. Every photo of a flip or vault is simply that. The freezing of time pronounces air form and action through dramatizing detail. From the extension of legs to facial expression — something is dialed in, not just for the person in the picture, but also for the person looking at it.

I believe that having physical material such as prints and magazines is essential for our community. One day, lots of us will look back at the exciting moments in our lives, and having photos to flip through will set the vibe for what a whole generation was like. And as parkour matures, documentation for future generations can inspire further innovation.

can inspire further innovation.

"THERE IS NOTHING LIKE THAT SINGLE MOMENT WHEN COMMITTING TO A JUMP, AND EXACTLY WHEN THAT TINY PIECE OF TIME IS CAPTURED."

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Matt Ledoux
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Grateful

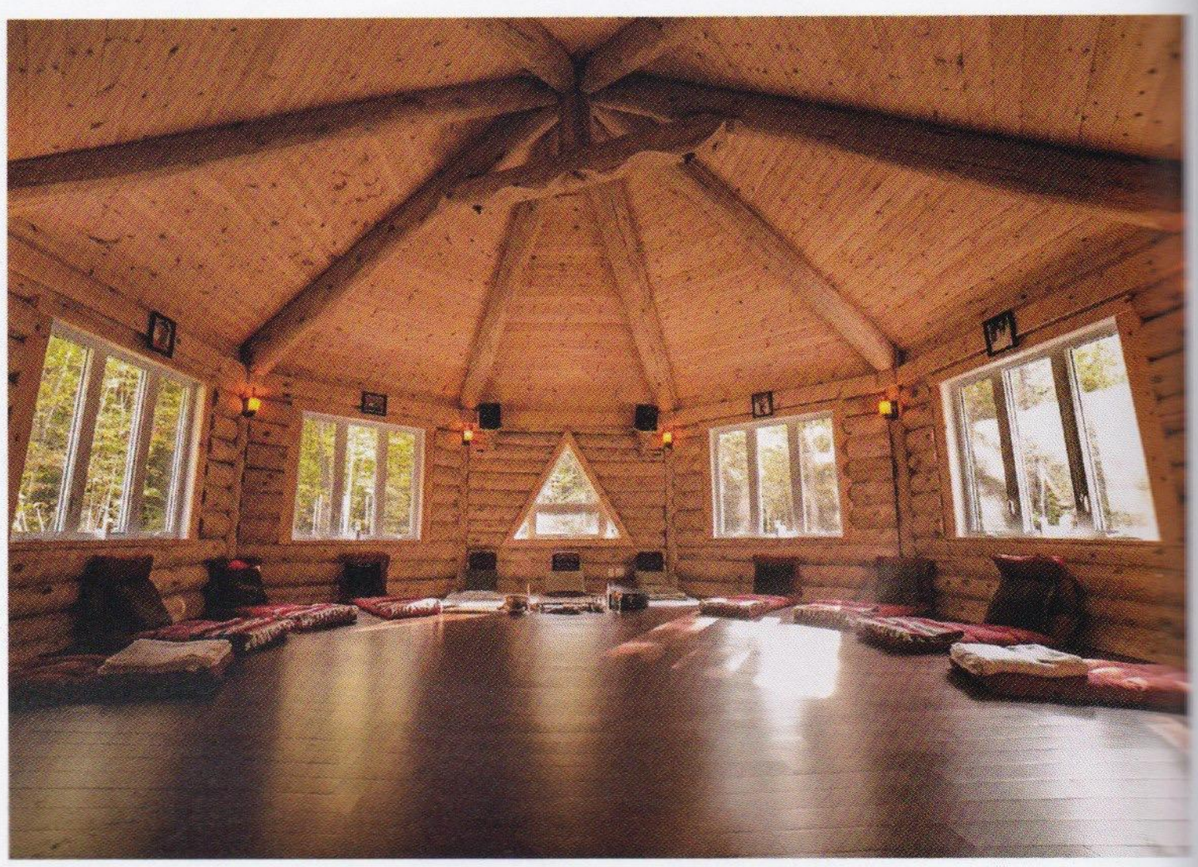
story by Andrew Obuseden

MATHIEU LEDOUX
I AM GRATEFUL

STORY + ILLUSTRATIONS BY **ANDREW OBENREDER**

So you spent a lot of time training parkour, rollerblading, and stunts - but besides those things, who is Mathieu Ledoux?

Who is Mathieu Ledoux? (Laughs) That's a question I've been asking myself for the last 15 years pretty much. On the surface, I'm just a regular human being who eats, laughs, sometimes cries, and I do my best to enjoy life. I have a bunch of friends, and I'm married to a beautiful woman. I do stunts for a living and also breathwork. We hold breathwork circles at my place. And I play music.



Tell me about the breathwork. What got you into that?

I was at a friend's place in Vancouver a few years back. Just sharing a good time together, and one of his close friends, who is like a brother, his name is Robin, was coming into town to give breathwork, which at that time I had no idea what this was. You know, my wife was into yoga and prānāyāma, and all those things, but I had never heard of a specific breathwork before. So we clicked right away, him and I, and as soon as we saw each other, we just started laughing and gave each other a big hug, and he said, "Hey, I'm doing breathwork in town tonight, and I'd love for you to join." So I said okay.

So I went, and it was very deep. So basically, it's just a connected breath - a pattern with a connected breath, and you breathe for about an hour while lying down on your back, and it acts as vibrational medicine. Your whole system starts to vibrate on a higher level, and everything that is laying down beneath the surface - stuck emotions or trauma that you had - might rise to the surface. It's a good integration practice, but it's very profound.

So after that experience, I wanted to share with my loved one and my friends, so I took the training teacher course for that and then my wife took the course also. Now we have a space, like a temple space, at my house to do that.

Which course was it?

It's BreathWave. It's very good. It's good for the emotional and physical. It relaxes your nervous system. It's a beautiful technique.

So I want to take this back a little bit. You met the Yamakasi on a project for the Cirque du Soleil in the early 2000s, was that the beginning of your experience within parkour?

No, it wasn't, and at the same time, it was. You know, I thought I knew what parkour was before, I had been training with my friends in parks, gyms, and everywhere, but it was really when I met Yann and Laurent from the Yamakasi that I truly understood parkour. I think it's different for everyone depending on where they are at in their life and their maturity, but meeting those guys had a profound impact on what this discipline, art, sport, or whatever you want to call it, was for me. So it was a beautiful meeting for me. It shaped the way I still train today.

So what about your training before versus after meeting them?

So before, it was mostly just a physical activity. Just like I was skating before, it was more just doing tricks and pushing myself - it was just lacking an aspect of - just more awareness, I guess. It has become like a yoga practice now.

What does that awareness look like?

Basically, it just goes back to us being very present. Sometimes I can do things while playing around a bar or just balancing to get as much joy and have as much fun as when I was jumping from roof to roof. It doesn't have to be as extravagant to have the same feeling.
It's hard to explain.

I definitely agree. I think it's much more of a feeling. You can say the words, but the feeling that comes with a mindful practice is just that: a feeling.

Yes, exactly. It has become much more of a mindful practice - thank you, that's the word.

I can move alone, I can train by myself, and it doesn't really matter. I also like to train with friends, but it's very much like meditation.

So what have been some of your most memorable moments within parkour?

Definitely meeting the Yamakasi. They invited us to do shows with them in Italy, and that was a fantastic experience as well. We trained in France with them and did some shows. And then probably different movies I've worked on where I had to move in a parkour-ish way. So incorporating parkour into the stunt work that I do is very fun. Sometimes I would get to create chases, and put my input into the action sequence, which was very creative and fun for me.

So you have a pretty extensive list of projects that you've worked on in terms of stunt work. Which has been the most memorable for you?

Definitely 300.

Ho-ho. What made 300 for you?

It was the amount of training we had before with a group called 87eleven from LA. They specialize in fighting and are amazing at building fight sequences and stuff like that. So to meet those guys and train with them for months, eight hours a day, and then working with them while shooting - I learned so much and got so much out of that experience.

What did the training look like?

Every day there would be fight choreography drills and sword drills, and at the end of the day, we had a physical training with Mark Twight, who owns Gym Jones in Salt Lake City. It was a type of CrossFit training with his own touch, and obviously, the physical trainings were pretty hardcore and intense. So it was like that every day for two months. So we trained fights and choreography for six to seven hours, and then we'd have a final training with Mark that would last for about an hour. We were also on a special diet, so we had a cook that was cooking for us the whole day, and we had protein shakes every three hours. It was a true regimen.

Yeah, it was amazing. I had done stuntwork before that, but nothing was coming my way, and my name was just starting to get around, but I was $15,000 in debt and was working with the Cirque du Soleil. I was pretty broke, and the Cirque du Soleil actually proposed me a contract for three years, gave me the pen, and it was a safety thing for me for three years, and I was like ah, you know, I want to do stunts, I don't want to do cirque. So I put the pen down and said, "Thank you, but I want to do stunts." That's what I had in my heart, and two weeks after, I went to the audition for 300, and I got in. So, it was a very special time for me.

I can imagine. Aside from 300, I know you've done a ton of work on the X-Men films. What was that like?

I think the most fun one was the last one that just came out, Dark Phoenix, because we worked on a sequence for that movie almost two years ago and they scrapped the whole sequence, so they had to re-shoot the ending. Not sure if you've seen it, but there is a sequence at the end that happens on a train. So they called in a new second unit director, who directs mostly action, and a different stunt crew from LA, and I got to be on that sequence for a few weeks. It was really fun to be thrown out of a train.

Oh man. That sounds like a good time. So I haven't seen it, but I'm looking forward to it.

One thing I am a little more familiar with is Assassin's Creed 3. You did stunts for that as well, yeah?

Yes, a little bit. Some mocap - mostly for fight stuff. Reactions, some key movements. It was just a few days of work. Some of my friends coordinate lots of the action for every Ubisoft game and Game On, another studio from Montreal, so that was my in.

Lately, besides X-Men and My Spy, I haven't been doing many stunts. I've just been home doing breathwork, working on music, going to meditation retreats, just been away a bit from the whole scene.

That happens, and sometimes we just need a break. Speaking of "the scene," what about inline? You have a pretty big history there as well.

Yeah, inline was what got me into it. It was my first passion in my life, and I was like 11 years old, so it was a long time ago (laughs). And it just evolved as I started doing parkour and everything else. Even martial arts had a huge impact on the way I move when I skate. I just started to skate again a few months ago, and I really enjoy it actually, more than ever. So yeah, skating was my main focus for many years. Then I got sponsored. I got a pro skate, pro wheels, and then I stopped (laughs).

What took you away from it?

It just wasn't fun for me anymore. I got caught in the whole "being sponsored" thing, you have obligations, and you have to skate, film, and take pictures. I kind of lost the love I had for the sport, which for me is more of an art than a sport, but I kind of lost my connection with that.

I can definitely relate there. It's what happened with me and parkour. I felt that I had basically lost myself within this individual who kind of existed within the realm of performance. There was this duality within my personality at the time where one of me felt very humbled by my experiences, and the other one only came out when I performed. I was just constantly training for performance or creating media for sponsorship fulfillment, and you know, this isn't why I started. Like I'd never go back or change any of the experiences, nor do I regret my choices, but coming back, I knew it wasn't for me, and I couldn't continue - I was losing the thing that I loved.

I hear you totally. There are a few friends at the gym where I train, and they want to "make it," you know, make a living out of it, and I always ask them, "What will you do when you have that money?" "Well, I'll be training." And I replied, "Well, isn't that what we're doing now?" And we both start laughing.

I'm very much interested in the cultural dialogue of parkour and where we can take those endeavors. I think that there is a way you can be involved in parkour, and have a profession there, without subtracting from the thing you love - for instance, this. I'm having conversations with interesting people and creating things that I enjoy creating, and while it isn't parkour directly, it provides a very good balance and allows me to stay connected to parkour, and then I can dedicate the rest of my time to all of the things I truly love without having to wear my mental thing. Because it's exactly like you told your friends: would you actually be doing the thing that you're doing now, the thing that you actually love? And if you're not, is the money truly worth it?

So I'm interested to see what the future holds in that regard. Will people be able to be event hosts, run media companies, or other things that are relative and can operate within the same plane of existence without being so conflictive?

Yeah, I feel it's different for everyone. Like within skating, I wasn't involved much within the industry side of it, I was just kind of doing my own thing, and in parkour it was the same. I went to one meeting in Montreal way back, and it felt more like a big showoff than anything else, and I really didn't enjoy it.

So I like to train with one or two people, and I feel the sharing is more genuine when you have smaller groups than within big groups.

Oh, I couldn't agree more (laughs). It's super interesting. I will go to a large jam now, and I'll literally stand there. Firstly, I didn't come here to wait in a line to train and not enjoy the space. I think its a super weird aspect within our culture. Like we want to be together, train together, and see all of our friends, but at the same time, it's not always a conducive environment for the movement that we do. I'm sure there are other movement practices that can function in larger groups, but I don't know if ours is one of them.

Yeah, I feel it. Like with yoga these days - it's like what yoga was created for and what yoga truly is. Like, I'm not judging anything, but it's totally different than commercial yoga where you go to studios. You dress a certain way, they put pictures of your poses on Instagram, which is totally fine, again, no judgment there - but I think the true yoga is way beyond taking photos of how you look. And for me, parkour is also a bit that way. It's about the movement itself, the feeling itself, and while sharing is a beautiful thing and it is healthy, it can easily slip into an unhealthy way of sharing when you're just waiting to have some likes, you're hiding intentions, or trying to become someone or something and that is where I lost myself in balancing back then.

SO MANY PEOPLE

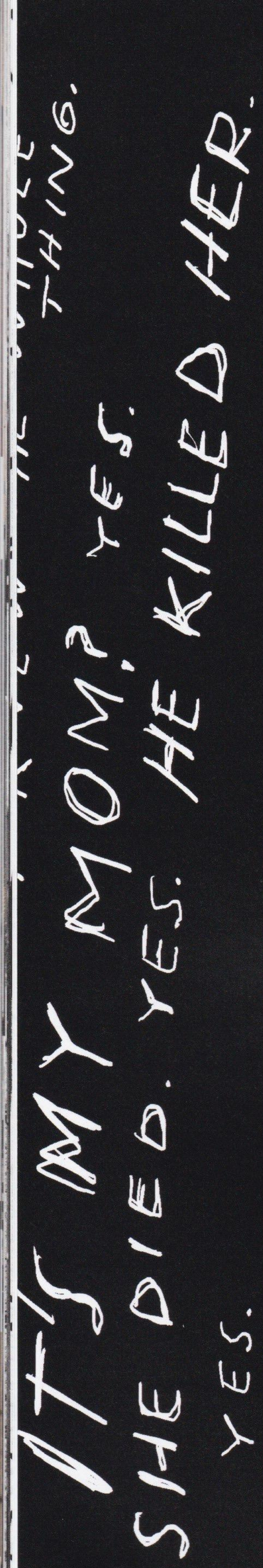
Speaking of skating again, many of my friends within the aggressive skate world saw you as someone who mixed the ideas parkour and blading in the attempts to create something new. But I have always thought that you had underlying respect for the movements, and also for what you personally wanted to be doing that created a working relationship between these two entities. So what exactly was that for you?

I find in any discipline, like inline skate, there is an unsaid rule on how you should be doing things. This is how you should do this trick, and you cannot do it this way. And it's the same in parkour. You need to be doing it this way or that way, otherwise it's not in the "Parkour Bible" or "Inline Skate Bible," and we create all these walls around things. The reason I got into skating was because I used to play hockey, and there were so many rules, and you had to do blah, blah, blah, so skating was a way for me to just express myself completely without any hindrance. So of course when I started mixing both, it was just part of me, parkour is just part of me, I was just expressing what is inside of me while I just had my skates on. It was just natural. Some people didn't like it at all. There were so many people bashing on it, and I understand, you know - it's threatening their bible almost (laughs). But, for me, it was just a natural thing and I really just enjoyed the freedom it gave me.

I feel like we - and I can't say it's just the skate community or the parkour community - but I think we as humans like to put things into boxes. Even if we're super disorganized people, we're like, "this should go here with all the things that look exactly like it, and this should go here." I've had this interesting thought for a while that a friend and I developed that "you shouldn't anything." We basically decided that we don't like or believe in the word "should." Why do something if you don't want or need to do it? Why do or think something just because you're told to? Why do we limit ourselves to these boxes that are so constricting? I've had too many friends that will say that the thing you're doing isn't aggressive inline, it's blank, simply because it doesn't conform to their personal definition and truth of what something is. So why force things to fit into a particular box if the size doesn't fit, just so we can easily identify and understand something or someone with little effort. I honestly think it comes down to an unwillingness to understand out of a place of comfort.

Exactly! (laughs) You're right. I think sometimes we feel the need to feel like we belong to something and to identify with something. So when that thing we identify with is being portrayed in a different way, or we feel like someone isn't respecting the underlying, unsaid rules about it, then it feels uncomfortable, because we have such a strong feeling of identification or belonging to that. Just like any religion basically. It creates separation - that's what our mind does - it separates everything. The beautiful thing is that without separation, without duality, there's no expression in any way - there's nothing. But at the same time, to understand a non-duality, then the duality becomes more healthy and more pure in a way.

I absolutely agree. It all lends itself to balance, doesn't it?



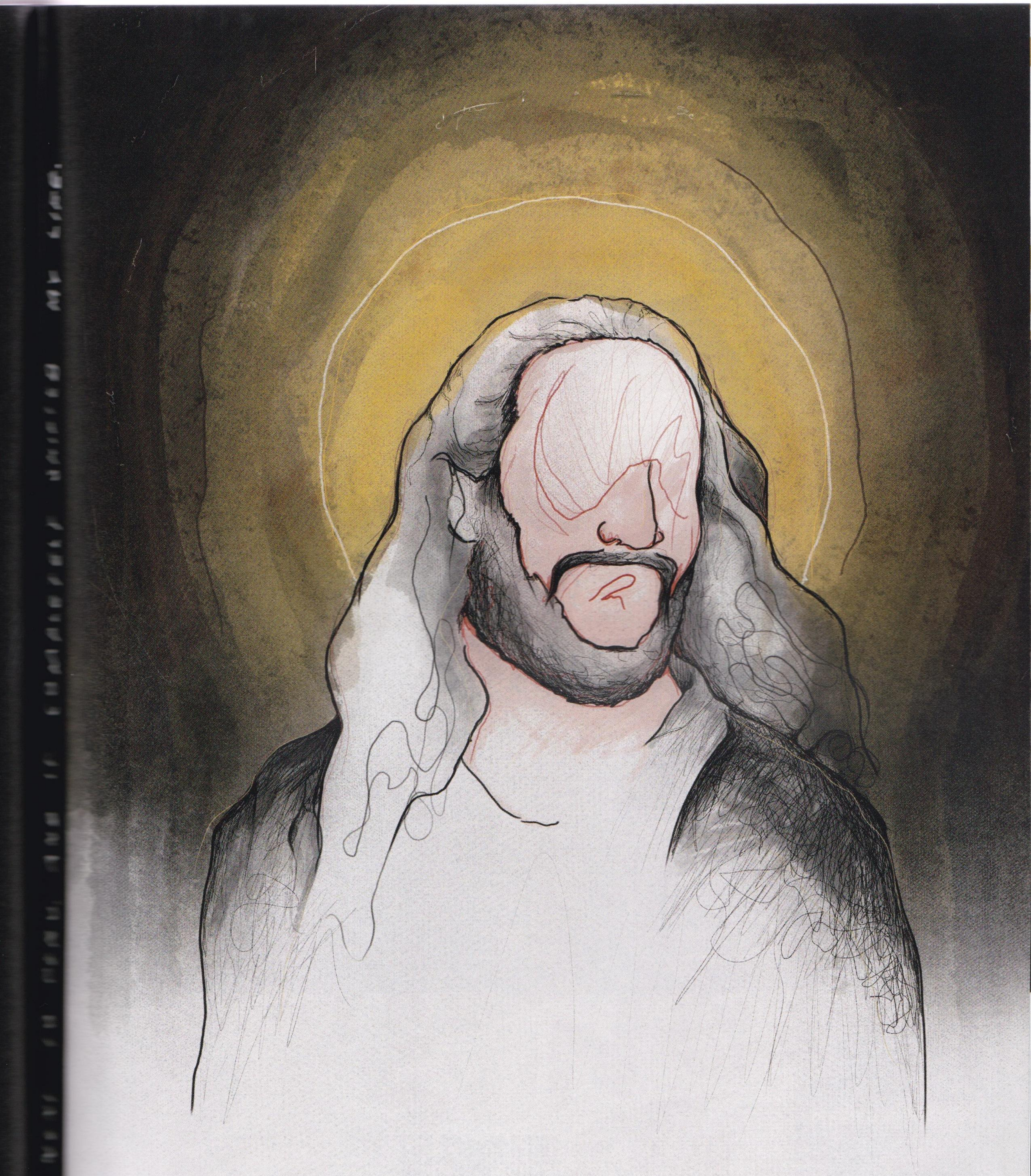
Going back to one of the first things you mentioned - your music - you have a recent album titled "An Old Good News". What led you to that project?

So, I grew up with my mother. My parents split when I was younger - there wasn't any drama - everything was healthy there. So I grew up with my mom, and she used to play guitar and write songs every weekend in the morning. After my first movie, Rollerball, I was going to California for ten days, and before I left on Christmas Eve, my mom told me that she was going to break up with her boyfriend and that she'll need me. So I said, “Yeah, mom, you know I'll be there - financially, emotionally - I'll be present with you.” So I left to California, and when I came back, my dad came and knocked on my door, and when I opened the door and saw my dad, I knew the whole thing. I said, “It's my mom?” and he said, “Yes,” and I said, "she died," and he said, “Yes,” and I said, “He killed her,” and he said, “Yes.”

So when my mom passed, I got her guitar as part of the inheritance, and it just stayed in my living room collecting dust. Eventually, I was working on Transporter the TV series doubling the lead actor, and it was three months in and we had three more to go, and I was just sick of it. I was driving in traffic every morning looking to my left and right, seeing unhappy people in their cars, stressed out, and I was looking in the mirror, and I saw myself like that as well. And something in me was burning for more. There must be something deeper, some deeper meaning in life. You know, where were Buddha and Jesus talking about? There must be more than just making money all the way to the grave. So I got to work that day, hit my head, and I took the rest of the day off. I went home, and I started crying, crying like a baby for two hours, and I was like okay, something is going on, and so I quit. I went back the next day, and my boss looked at me and said, “You're done?” Like I hadn't even spoken, and he knew, and I told him, “Yes, I'm done.” And he was very cool - he said, “Before being your boss, I'm your friend, so go home.” So I went home, I booked a flight to Peru, and a retreat with Ayahuasca - it was three ceremonies in a week.

I went to Peru, and it completely shifted my life. I got home from the trip, I was with my wife, I looked at the guitar, and I said, "Oh my gosh, I was sleeping on it!" So I took the guitar, and I started playing, and then my love for truth - like god, everyone has a different perception of that word and what it means, you know, so I'm very careful with that word - but for unconditional love, peace, unity, for deeper truth in my being. That devotion is where the music comes from. That's how it started. And over the years, going back to Peru every year, spending three months, two months every time - those songs start to come. I've never written any songs. They just come. I play them, and then they're in my mind, but I never wrote anything down. I felt like the hard drive was pretty full, so I had to record them somehow.

At first I had just said “Maybe something very simple, just recording my own songs just for me so I have them,” but then my friend who has a studio was like, “No, let's make an album,” and I was like, “Really?” and he was like, “Yeah, yeah.” So the project was mostly for myself and everyone who's been around and hearing the songs so they could have something. But it's been an amazing learning experience for me. Like, I'm just taking vocal classes now - I don't even know how to sing. So to let that out in the world, it was very vulnerable.



I believe music very much is. I think anything we put ourselves into openly creates a very vulnerability space, but music, for me, through the way I have known it and felt it my whole life, has always been a very vulnerable process. I grew up in a musical family; it's always been in my heart. I started playing guitar when I was seven or so, but I never truly gave myself to it, and I don't think I took it very seriously until maybe six or seven years ago. I always wanted to make music, but I didn't have it in myself and wouldn't dedicate myself to that process because of the idea of being so vulnerable, and putting yourself into words and presenting that little piece of yourself. Maybe people don't understand or accept it, and that was always super terrifying. And I told myself I would never write love songs - not that I didn't care about love, as it's an extremely profound thing, but I didn't want to write romantic songs. But I ended up going spending the last 13 years going through these unbelievably intense romantic and platonic relationships, and it hit me, and I was like, man, I always wanted to write about philosophy, society, and the state of our bizarre existence, but I have to write this. It's the most personal experiences I can present to the world, and I need to learn from them and continue on. So it's been an interesting process coming to something I never thought I'd come to, and allowing myself to be vulnerable, both alone and with others. So it's refreshing to hear you say that.

Yeah, for me, especially devotion music in the morning, they're like prayers, you know. They set my day up. And then from there, everyone I meet in the streets or talk to - it comes much more easily from my heart than from my mind - just from setting up my day with this music. It's such a blessing, as you know, to hold an instrument in your hand and let come through what comes through, and also being a witness to it all. Like I have no idea how this came into my life, I don't control anything. I can just say yes or resist and pretend I can say no (laughs).

(Laughs) Right, it is pretending at that point as well.

If you could give the world one of the prayers or songs from the album, which one would it be?

I think it would be "I Am Grateful." As it starts, it says, "Hey, my friend, have you find in here what you've been looking for. Because here is the word, and here comes the song, and he is thy open door. So come out of this house, built upon sand for thy kingdom is here at hand.

I really enjoyed that one. I actually heard it this morning. I listened to your album around the time that you released it, but I don't think I had given it an entire listen and missed out on four songs or so, so I listened this morning, and it's quite beautiful. Quite the connective piece, I very much enjoyed it.

Ah, thank you. Yeah, you know, it's like any book, and when you read a book, you understand it and perceive it a certain way, but then when you open different doors of perceptions within yourself and then read a book, you're like, "Woah! I didn't get that - I didn't get that either."

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SO COME OUT
THIS HOUSE I BUILT
UPON SAND FOR THY
KINGDOM
AT HAND.
IS HERE

You are preparing to jump. Maybe it is mentally challenging, but not so much physically, or maybe it is a physical behemoth that you have fought against for years. You have walked to face it many times, visualized it, and feel that you are ready, but something is still holding you back. Are you capable of being in the present moment or does fear for the future possibilities keep you tied to where you stand?

Mindfulness is the ability to maintain a present awareness of self and the thoughts, feelings, sensations, and environment that make it. Typically, we allow breathing to be an automatic, subconscious process. However, having conscious control over breathing plays an integral role in the ability to be present and how we experience the present. Breathwork, which stems from Prāāyāma, the Hindu regulation of the breath, is a general term for any practice of conscious breathing control.

Breath is a vital function within physical activity and one that is undervalued. You hear too often about people holding their breath during movements, let alone utilizing conscious breathing to further one's ability. Why is breathing so crucial during activity, and how could conscious control over our breath potentially be used to enhance our training further?

Oxygen is necessary for the body to expel energy, and the body needs more oxygen during higher levels of physical activity. The diaphragm, a muscle that sits in the abdominal cavity, is physically responsible for the almost endless cycle of respiration. Respiration is a unique process in the sense that it can either operate under conscious or subconscious control.

Different breathing patterns can activate various nervous system responses. Proper breathing activates the parasympathetic nervous system, which is one of three divisions in the autonomic nervous system responsible for rest and digestion. Shallow breathing, on the other hand, activates your sympathetic nervous system, which is responsible for the stimulation of the body's fight-or-flight response, and is continuously active at a basic level to maintain homeostasis.

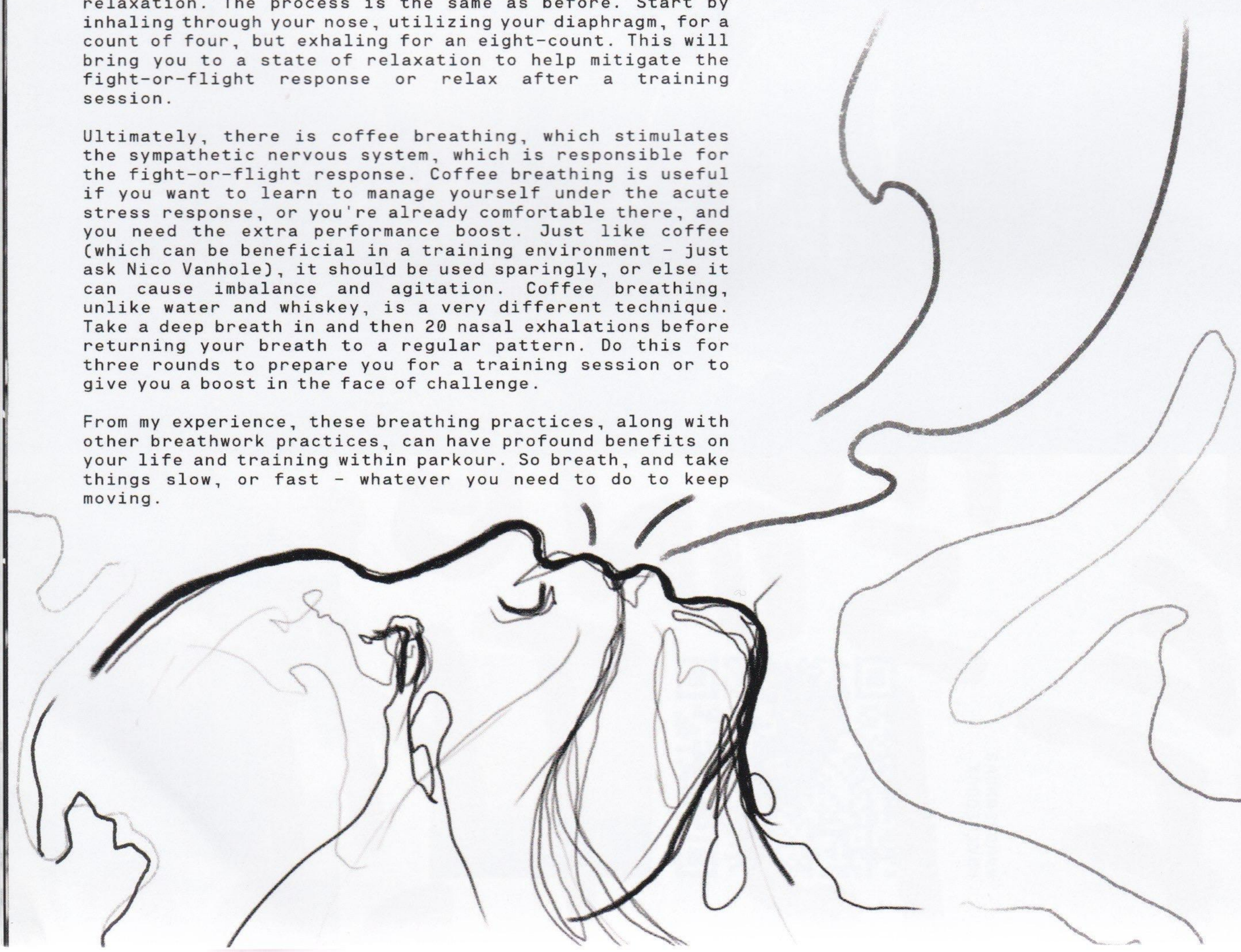
Typically, we allow our autonomic nervous system to operate subconsciously, but what benefits could exist if you were consciously in control of the respiratory process? How could we utilize these benefits within parkour? We are going to focus on three breathing patterns that yoga expert, Lucas Rockwood, calls water, whiskey, and coffee breathing.

Water breathing creates a balanced nervous system. If you are up, it will carry you down, and if you are down, it will lift you. Start by inhaling through your nose, breathing from your diaphragm for a four-count and than exhaling to a four-count. By bringing your breath count to four to six breaths per minute for three minutes, you will balance your nervous system, which could be used prior to training to create a positive space for movement, reduce minor stress of a challenge, or to help you get things moving when you're feeling sluggish.

Say you are a person who doesn't operate well under active stress response (because you haven't trained under it enough to manage it), and you have your adrenaline pumping prior to or after a jump. Alternatively, whiskey breathing may do the trick. Just like alcohol (outside of training environments, obviously), whiskey breathing should be used sparingly. Whiskey breathing stimulates the parasympathetic nervous system, bringing you to a state of relaxation. The process is the same as before. Start by inhaling through your nose, utilizing your diaphragm, for a count of four, but exhaling for an eight-count. This will bring you to a state of relaxation to help mitigate the fight-or-flight response or relax after a training session.

Ultimately, there is coffee breathing, which stimulates the sympathetic nervous system, which is responsible for the fight-or-flight response. Coffee breathing is useful if you want to learn to manage yourself under the acute stress response, or you're already comfortable there, and you need the extra performance boost. Just like coffee (which can be beneficial in a training environment - just ask Nico Vanhole), it should be used sparingly, or else it can cause imbalance and agitation. Coffee breathing, unlike water and whiskey, is a very different technique. Take a deep breath in and then 20 nasal exhalations before returning your breath to a regular pattern. Do this for three rounds to prepare you for a training session or to give you a boost in the face of challenge.

From my experience, these breathing practices, along with other breathwork practices, can have profound benefits on your life and training within parkour. So breath, and take things slow, or fast - whatever you need to do to keep moving.



STORY + ILLUSTRATION BY ANDREW OBENREDER @ANDREWMUVS

WATER, WHISKEY, AND COFFEE BREATH MIGHT BE MORE THAN JUST HALITOSIS.

DOUBLE CONSCIOUSNESS: OBEDIENCE AND FREEDOM

THE DUALITY BETWEEN HOW WE VIEW OURSELVES AND HOW OTHERS PERCIEVE US IN RELATION TO OBEDIENCE AND FREEDOM WITHIN PARKOUR.

STORY BY **RENAE DAMBLY** @RENAEDAMBLY

ILLUSTRATION BY **ANDREW OBENREDER** @ANDREWMUVS

The double consciousness, according to Du Bois, is seeing yourself and knowing how others see you. It is when two cultures engross one person to create two perspectives. The double consciousness is a product of dualism. Dualism is oppositional pairs that were put in place by the trauma and split from colonization. When dualisms are lived, it is brought into question what identity really is and how dualism has created a lived experience of split identities. Race, gender, sexuality, and nationality are some examples of these lived dualisms. Lived dualisms change a human being's sense of self. The sense of self is deeply shaped by cultural context. This includes self- awareness, values, attitudes, and environment. When the sense of self is conflicted, the person's behaviors and values are altered to fit an external sense of self; thus, double consciousness is formed. Another term for the double consciousness is "twoness": knowing how one is viewed by the dominant culture and how one views oneself through their own cultural lens.

My personal double consciousness is obedience and freedom within my environment. The dominant culture is a law-abiding society, and my culture is parkour. Parkour is a movement discipline that focuses on efficient and effective body movements to get from point A to point B. Parkour values freedom of movement and exploration. It is about adapting, exploring, and utilizing everything around you and within you. I do not see walls and fences as boundaries; I see them as places to explore. Unfortunately, people who do not share this view look at me as a delinquent who is trying to vandalize and pollute property. This has created twoness within me because I respect authority and also want to investigate the possibilities of my surroundings.

I have had so many negative experiences with authoritative figures jumping to conclusions when they see me training that I feel the need to avoid training in certain places, and to make sure kids do not see me so that I may not be a "bad influence" to them. Du Bois asks the question "How does it feel to be a problem?" This question speaks to me because my existence as a parkour athlete is viewed as a problem. I hear parents tell their kids "Do not get any ideas," and often they will leave if I start training at the same park or I will be asked to leave. These experiences have led me to change my external sense of self by losing my desire to explore and risk dealing with an upset observer or security guard. I want parkour to be viewed as a positive influence, and the negativity that we so often receive from onlookers deters me from practicing my own movement. I view my explorations as mind-opening, and they are so often shut down by others.

My double consciousness has shaped my life into becoming a coach. I want to put myself into a leadership position to help others understand and see the roots of why parkour athletes act how they do, and why society does not always agree. It is amazing to experience conversations with parents and students about parkour culture and be reminded of "…this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity" (Du Bois, 1903) This sensation is created through the words of concerned people who are skeptical of parkour as a discipline. They still so often view it as a sport for "wannabe ninja" kids and irresponsible adults. There are even large organizations that want to control parkour because they see us as an unorganized and scattered people that need guidance. These views represent the views of the dominant culture, and I must constantly ask myself, "Do I give in, or do I fight for the discipline that is so much more than they see?"

It is easy to give in to the temptation of popularity and money, but "…inspiration strives with doubt, and faith with vain questionings." (Du Bois, 1903) I will not stop questioning society's actions, and I will continue to integrate my perspectives so that I can provide education and an understanding of my culture to the other.

BLOCKCHAIN AND PARKOUR

PARKOUR MAY BE THE MOST EFFICIENT WAY FROM A TO B, BUT BLOCKCHAIN TECHNOLOGY COULD HELP US AGREE WHICH ROUTES ARE BEST.

Parkour may be the first sport born alongside the internet. The World Wide Web extends its threads throughout the media history of the sport and its evolution from forums to local, national, and global communities. Most significant changes in the sport come alongside an innovation in technology, such as the migration of the online community from YouTube to Facebook to Instagram as each developed better services to suit our social needs. While social media currently dominates the history of the culture, I believe that one day, blockchain will revolutionize the scale of how we interact as a community with grassroots businesses and services.

No, I'm not just talking about ***Bitcoin*** or ***Crypto***. Also, I am not your financial advisor. This is not financial advice. I'm mostly talking about what blockchain enables us to do, not how we pay for it, though you should study bull/bear markets so you can reap gains from crypto volatility long term. So what the hell is a blockchain anyway? (See the glossary at the bottom of the article, the first instances glossary words will be denoted in italics)

A ***blockchain*** is a (sometimes) decentralized system of ***nodes*** that work together to arrive at a consensus - thus providing security, efficiency, etc. Basically, each member of the blockchain is able to verify that other members are telling the truth. This provides a lot of opportunities for expanding how the community interacts with one another. Parkour may be the most efficient way from A to B, but blockchain helps us agree which routes are best.

Here are some examples of what I mean.

DIGITAL MEDIA TRX is an ***ERC-20*** token built on the ***Ethereum*** blockchain that allows us to ***tokenize*** media rights. So we could, in theory, create a similar blockchain that gives a content creator rewards every time someone consumes, shares, or interacts with them. Steemit is already doing this with their social media platform that allows for tipping creators. Blockchains like Ethereum enable us to create derivative blockchains for whatever our communities deem most valuable to us.

GOVERNANCE For example, we could create a governance blockchain that allows us to award members voting tokens that they can spend in elections or debates. This would allow USPK or Parkour Earth (or even FIG) to get feedback from their communities to make decisions that are best for each group. If a specific part of the country or world is lacking resources like public parks or gyms, then the members of the blockchain could elect to send resources to communities that need them most.

EDUCATION We could make unsolicited advice a thing of the past by creating a protocol that allows for members to vote on the best way to correct someone's flip form or technique. Therefore, the community could decide which movement practices and styles it values most and reward them accordingly. Because we tokenized our media, members could suggest tutorials that would best address the movement someone is working on and the creator of the tutorial would be rewarded for providing information that benefited community growth.

GAMING We could also gamify decision making by creating virtual replicas of the community and allowing members to participate in growing the economy by playing a dApp like Sims or Rollercoaster Tycoon. The collective decision making of all the gamers could help verify which gyms need the most improvements and how to invest in them properly. Through blockchain, we could share communal stores of wealth designed specifically for grants and innovations needed most by our community.

EVENTS Members could submit and elect which events are most relevant to them, and the blockchain could verify where is best to host them and who is best to run the events. We could reward participation in grassroots parkour events more heavily than outside influence like FIG or Red Bull by awarding tokens to those that work to improve the events. The community could have a say in its own future.

RETAIL We could dramatically alter how parkour clothing is bought and sold by encrypting a person's size and preferences in brands. So Storror would know they need at least 50 small shirts because they know from the blockchain that 50 individuals with that size are interested in purchasing their product. This would radically change how many units a brand would need to create for sale, thus reducing waste of resources within the parkour economy.

Our options are limited only by our imagination and the technical requirements to make them reality - the obstacle is the path as always.

It is my sincere belief that advances in blockchain technology will enable the most exciting changes the sport has experienced since the early internet. But, we can only reap the rewards if we are willing to educate ourselves and utilize it to our benefit. So whether we fund raise by becoming Bitcoin millionaires or crowdfunding heavily, we need to invest in hiring or educating blockchain developers devoted to providing value to our sport and culture.

Thanks so much for reading and feel free to request access to my private Facebook group "Parkour Crypto Club" if you want to get more engaged in community discussions about cryptocurrency and blockchain technology.

GLOSSARY

Blockchain a system in which a record of transactions made in Bitcoin or another cryptocurrency are maintained across several computers that are linked in peer-to-peer networks

Decentralization - to distribute the administrative powers or functions of a central authority over a less concentrated area to ensure fairness

Nodes - a device on a blockchain network that is, in essence, the foundation of the technology, allowing it to function and survive. Nodes are distributed across a widespread network and carry out a variety of tasks

Cryptocurrency/Crypto - a digital currency in which encryption techniques are used to regulate the generation of units of currency and verify the transfer of funds, operating independently of a central bank

Bitcoin - a type of digital currency in which a record of transactions is maintained, and new units of currency are generated by the computational solution of mathematical problems, and which operates independently of a central bank. Can be thought of a digital form of the gold standard

Ethereum - an open-source, public, blockchain-based distributed computing platform and operating system featuring smart contract (scripting) functionality. Ether can be transferred between accounts and used to compensate participant mining nodes for computations performed (Ether is Ethereum's cryptocurrency)

ERC-20 Token - ERC-20 is a protocol standard that defines certain rules and standards for issuing tokens on Ethereum's network

Tokenization - the process of replacing sensitive data with unique identification symbols that retain all the essential information about the data without compromising its security

dApps - Decentralized applications (dApps) are applications that run on a P2P network of computers rather than a single computer

PK64

MARIO SHARES THE SAME FUNDAMENTAL FOUNDATION OF OUR SPORT AND IS THE PILLAR OF THE PERFECT PARKOUR GAME.

PRESS A TO JUMP > TO READ MORE

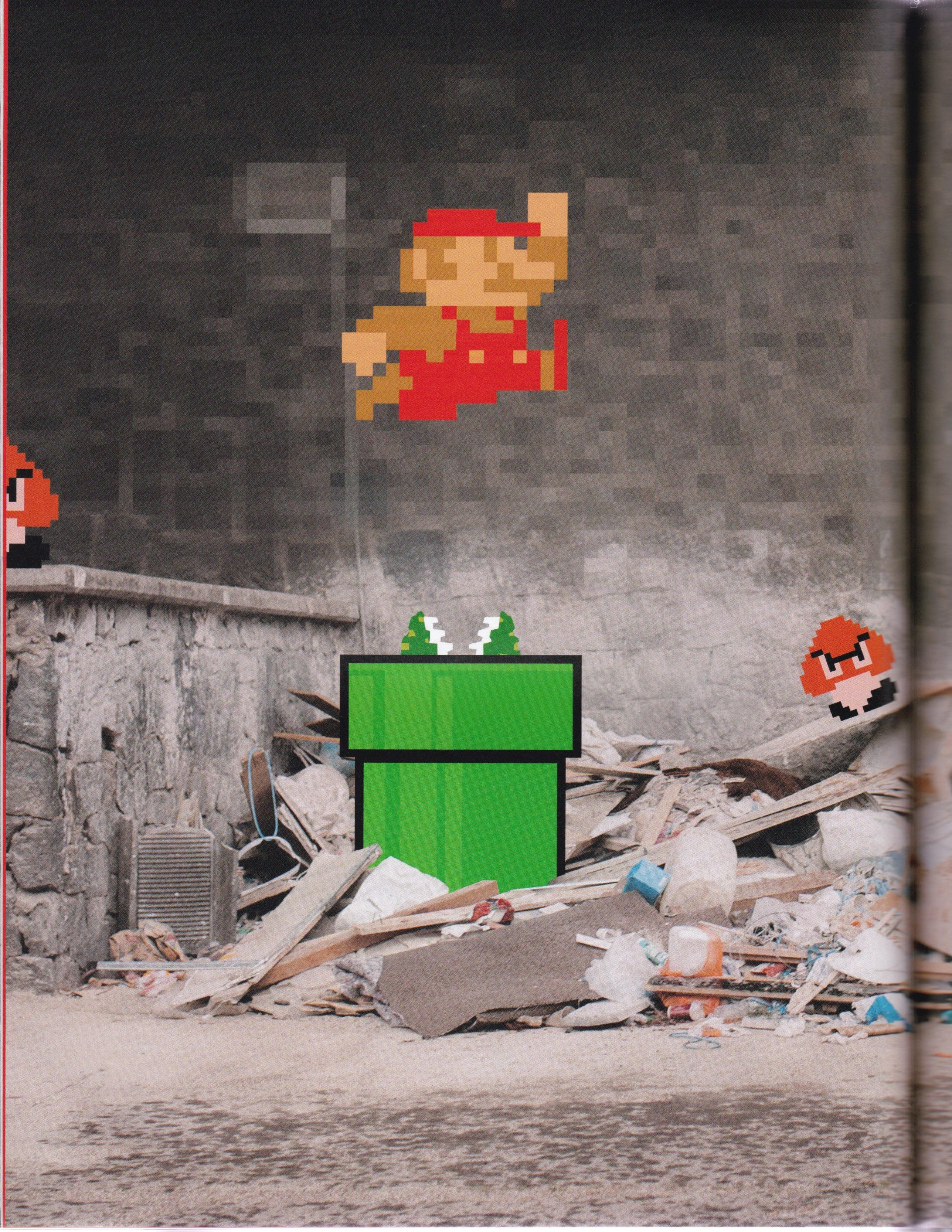
Release date: Donkey Kong (July 9, 1981)
Mario Bros. (July 14, 1983)
Super Mario 64 (September 26, 1996)
Developer: Nintendo
Director: Shigeru Miyamoto
Platform: Nintendo systems, arcade

STORY BY BRYAN AUSTIN @NOKNOWNTRUTHS
ILLUSTRATIONS BY ANDREW OBENREDER @ANDREWMUVS

Super Mario is the mascot for the video game company Nintendo, and he is known far and wide and throughout every land. Even the Sentinelese people on that secluded island were like "Yo, how's the new Mario game?" before they killed the last dude who came to their island. Okay maybe not, but Osama Bin Laden had that shit on his hard drive, so you know it's dope. Let's get serious. The most influential video game character of all time was released with a different name, a very suiting name: "Jumpman." This short 30-year-old Italian plumber is the very embodiment of jumping. He'll jump on his enemies, his friends, pipes, bricks, clouds, and your mom's boyfriend, Greg. Mario shares the same fundamental foundation of our sport, and we're connected at the feet like Siamese twins of jumping.

Mario debuted in the 1981 classic arcade platformer, Donkey Kong. It was here that he was first able to show off his athletic prowess, as he deftly jumped over an endless supply of barrels and scaled scaffolding to save a princess from a giant gorilla. Two years later, we got a glimpse of his everyday life as he and his brother Luigi cleaned sewers by jumping on turtles and crabs. After proving his appeal by helping Mr. Game & Watch clean oil spills and deliver bombs, it was finally time for Mario to show his real skills. Super Mario Bros. hit the shelves in 1985 becoming the consoles #1 seller, and solidified Mario as a household name and bringing joy to millions of children around the world. His spot in history sealed, his legacy continues with new games released regularly.

Just as we have grown and evolved, the Mario games have as well. Starting with simple precisions from pipes to blocks, and later progressing into complex flowing movements, traversing through colorful ever-expanding worlds. Mario tackles greater obstacles and enemies with each passing game, accompanied by a lively group of friends, each with a distinct set of abilities that help in their own jumping endeavors. It's just like us in a way, exploring new lands, making friends, and learning from one another to improve and overcome our obstacles. Isn't that nice and wholesome.



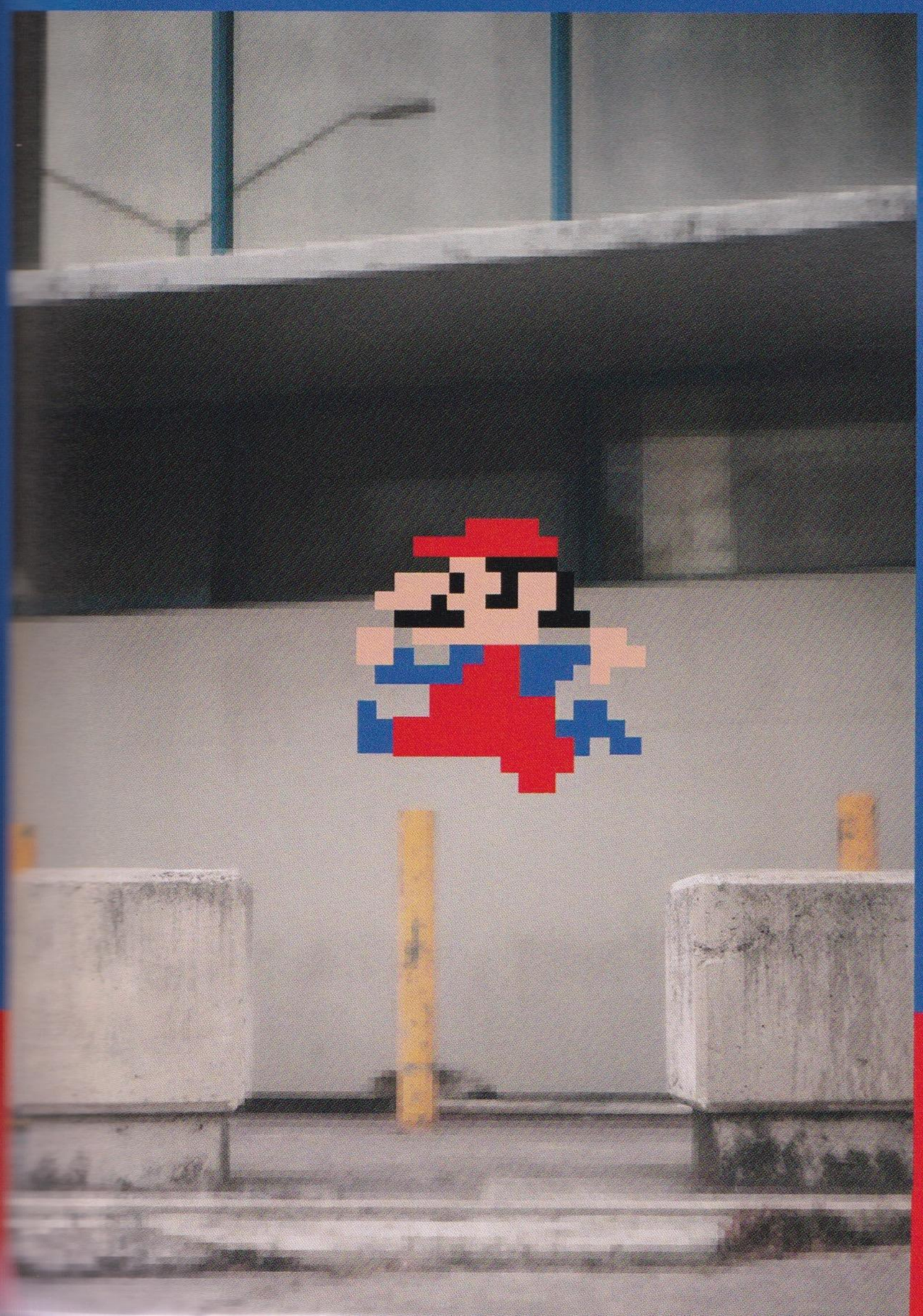
Out of all the Mario games, there is still one that stands out to me as the one that solidified Mario as the perfect parkour game: Super Mario 64. At its time, Mario 64 had an incredibly important task to perform. Being Nintendo's flagship title as well as transitioning for the first time from two to three dimensions, it was a crucial game in the series and needed to be well received. Luckily Nintendo knew this, so they donned their spiritual overalls and performed a ritual. The God-king of games, Shigeru Miyamoto, rose from his slumber to create his next masterpiece.

When developing games, Miyamoto and his team tend to work from the ground up, starting with simple concepts that they refine until they work. Once they have something that works, they scale it to a fully-fledged game based on this core concept. Mario 64's core was its movement. Miyamoto knew that if moving around in the game wasn't as intuitive and enjoyable as his 2D predecessors, the game wouldn't be good. Up to that point in time, no game had utilized movement on a 3D plane to such an amazing degree. Every twitch of the analog stick and button press is greeted with a satisfying and intuitive response. Jumping, diving, flipping, crawling, swimming, sliding, all fluidly intertwined and grounded in momentum and gravity. All in varying environments, handcrafted to take advantage of everything that Mario can perform and more. This is a game that I truly believe encompasses everything that is parkour. Each mission had one simple task: to collect a star placed somewhere on the map. The freedom and creativity in which you can accomplish every objective is inspiring, even compared to many games nowadays who try to achieve the same.

Within the gaming community, Mario 64 is still considered one of the greatest games to speedrun. Speedrunning is a competitive form of gaming in which the goal is completing a game within the shortest time possible. Because of its emphasis on skill-based precision movement and its environmental freedom, Mario 64 is perfect for this form of competition. Watching one of these speedruns showcases just how well the game's movement systems are designed. It's a fascinating subsection of the gaming world that we may need to look over later. It also bears a striking similarity to speed courses in our very own parkour competitions. Both put skill and experience to the test in order to achieve the most efficient run. They both rely heavily on our innate desire to improve and perfect our own abilities. The most recent successor in the series, Super Mario Odyssey, uniquely implements this idea. Players can place balloons throughout levels, challenging others to reach them within a time limit, just like how we create challenges for each other while training. I hope this illustrates just how similar our cultures and communities are. We can all learn from one another. That nerdy guy who sits at home playing games and the guy that hits the gym each day, a lot of the time they end up being one and the same.

Successors to Mario 64 all share the same spirit and charm. Each has worked to improve upon the formula of the last, adding new abilities and moves for Mario to perform as he jumps his way through ever-expanding landscapes. Mario traversed deserts and swam through oceans in Sunshine, crossed the galaxy in...Galaxy...and went pretty much everywhere in Odyssey. In recent games, he's revived as a 2D platformer, taking back his roots and tackling levels designed by other players. If such player interactivity could be introduced into its 3D counterpart, it would bring an entirely new level of depth and creativity into the series. Whatever they end up doing with Mario next, I'm sure it will be just as enjoyable.

Mario is more than just a mascot. He's an idol, the little Italian jumping spirit that lives in all of us. Where does he live, right there, right in your butt cheeks where your jumping muscles are. His games are the reason I feel naked if there's no jump button in other games. I'm sure his colorful backgrounds will forever be painted onto parkour parks until the end of time. And I'm sure we'll continue to buy his Halloween costumes and dress up like him as a gimmick to get YouTube views for just as long.



Super Mario Bros. All-Stars (a collection of the first three Mario titles) was my very first leap into video games. I personally have fond memories of many restless nights spent stumbling my way through each level. These games taught me and many others how to persevere, how to deal with the obstacles and frustrations in our path, and how to push forward and improve. Thank you, Miyamoto, for creating the character who somehow ended up representing everything we love about parkour. He's an inspiration to us all.

PEOPLE OF PARKOUR

STORY BY **NATHAN CEPHAS** PHOTOS BY **ANDREW OBENREDER + NATHAN CEPHAS**

THE SPONTANEOUS YOUTH PHASE

NATHAN CEPHAS

I DON'T WANT TO JUST SAY IT'S THIS & SET IT AT THAT.

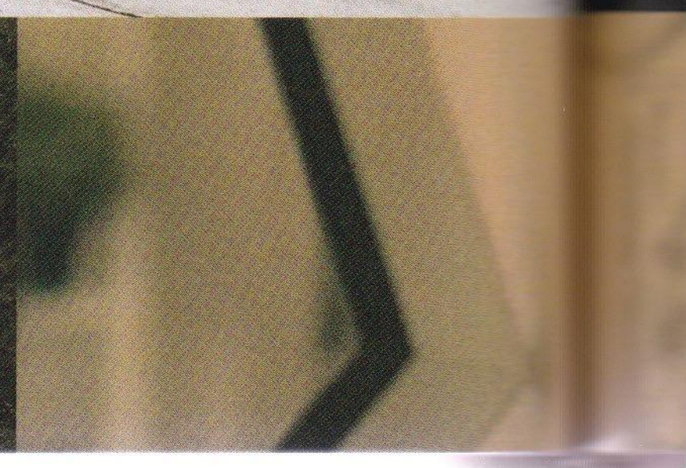
It's just the SPONTANEOUS YOUTH - it's whatever you want to see it as.

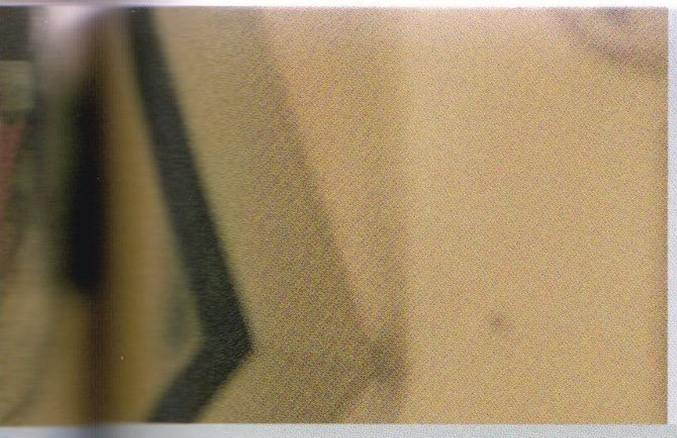
I think a lot of the inspiration comes from being a teenager and seeing people go through all the shit that you don't have to go through. It's like knowing what you want or not knowing what you want to do with your life, but just being pushed into something that you don't want to do anyway. You, as a free individual, should be the one to make the decisions regarding your present and future life. People are so caught up in their lives that they're not being able to live through a finer spirit - through everything they can possibly do as a human being.

When I was 16, I was like, "Ah, I don't know what I want to do - or what should I do? And who am I? But I don't even know who I am, but I'm supposed to know what I'm supposed to do for the rest of my life until I'm old and shrivel." I do see like - hey, maybe I'd want to do that, or I have a lot of examples of "that's exactly what I don't want to do."

Like how we're making films - like if we continue to make films, and make amazing shit, people are going to be like, "Oh, my god! And they're so young." That whole young aspect is what's forever grasping my attention because you look at a baby doing something - he's one-year-old and doing something so far ahead of his time, and it's so amazing just because he's doing it. And then you see an old person doing it - it's not going to be the same whatsoever.

It all comes down to the idea of empowerment and what we can do through what we create and how we live our lives. Even just a conversation on the street could change somebody. And from that change, someone may feel so empowered that they go and tell somebody else, and they tell somebody else and tell somebody else, tell somebody else, and it just keeps going.





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To me, there is like this simplicity to parkour. That it's so simple that you can just look at it and just pick it up, but people see it, and it's still not getting through. With just overcoming and applying that to multiple things - because it's mental, it's going to carry on inside your head, because you're not just using your brain in parkour, you're using your brain with your whole life.

That whole aspect of doing something that hasn't been done, or doing it in a different type of way because you are yourself - so, within that, we can bring that to our artwork, we can bring that to whatever we're writing.

Parkour - it's so much to say "This is what it did," because it's done so much.

A JOURNEY TO CHERNOBYL

STORY + PHOTOS BY **ALEK RAEV**

FOLLOW ALEK RAEV AND SMOARE AS THEY VENTURE ON AN UNAUTHORIZED JOURNEY INSIDE THE EXCLUSION ZONE OF THE UKRAINE.

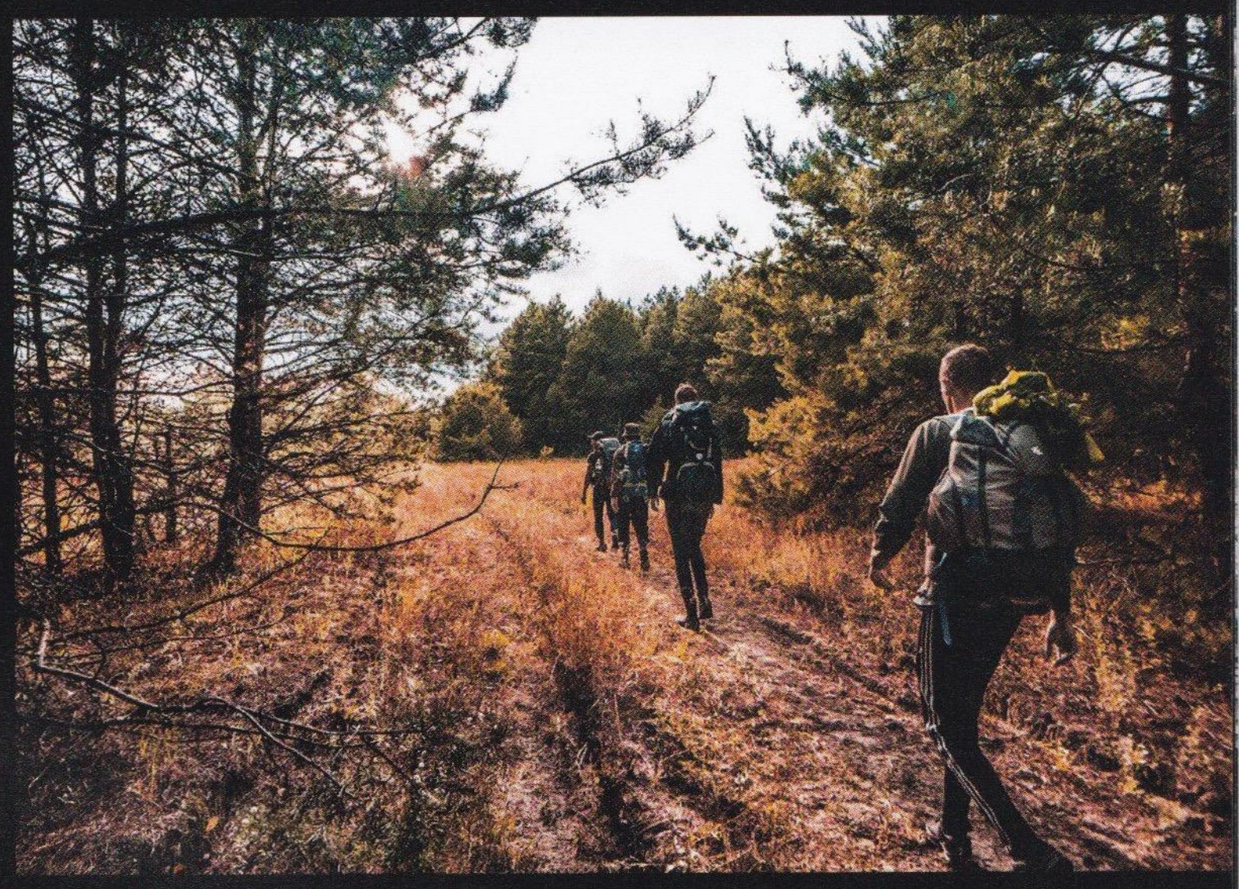
When Chernobyl's nuclear accident occurred on April 1986, it was said that the zone would be uninhabitable for the next 40,000 years - although some people are still living very close and unwilling to leave their homes. It is said that living in the area is equivalent to signing one's own death warrant. But perhaps not.

AlekUrbex and Team Smoare, a parkour collective formed by three young freerunners, traveled this summer to the actual center of the nuclear power plant. "We wanted to see with our own eyes how nature had colonized the urban spaces that we only knew from what we had read or seen in photos."

"Going to Chernobyl was totally worth it," says Rob "but we really didn't know what to expect, and it left us speechless." Before steering towards the ghost town, the collective visited Kiev to meet some of the traceurs from the Ukrainian city.

In Kiev, they met with someone interested in urban exploring who had been to Chernobyl three or four times using GPS. "He knew the way and knew the police checkpoints and, more importantly, how to avoid them," explains Alek. There are many military checkpoints around the nuclear power plant to prevent access to the prohibited zone. Those who break the law can go to prison without trial.

"We wanted to see with our own eyes how nature had colonized the urban spaces that we only knew *from* what we had read or seen in photos."



We drove from Kiev to a place around 12 miles from the first checkpoint. Then we climbed through a hole in the mesh fence and started walking," says Yvo. The first night they walked for 12 hours. In the power plant, the work to isolate the perforated sarcophagus continues with high risks of radioactive exposure, hence the military patrols and the ban on civilians.

"To avoid some of the guards we had to cross through highly radioactive areas that seriously worried us," admits Alek. "Yvo got a cut in his hand, and when measuring the radioactivity with the Geiger counter, we saw it was seriously high." Some of the vegetation they touched was 14 times more radioactive than the safe limit. The limit of daily radioactivity is 0.30mSv. The group reached up to 10.20 mSv in the woods, but only during very brief exposures. They slept in places where radioactivity wouldn't exceed the limit, but they still had to be very careful. "We were amazed about what we were seeing and looking forward to coming back home," said Rob.

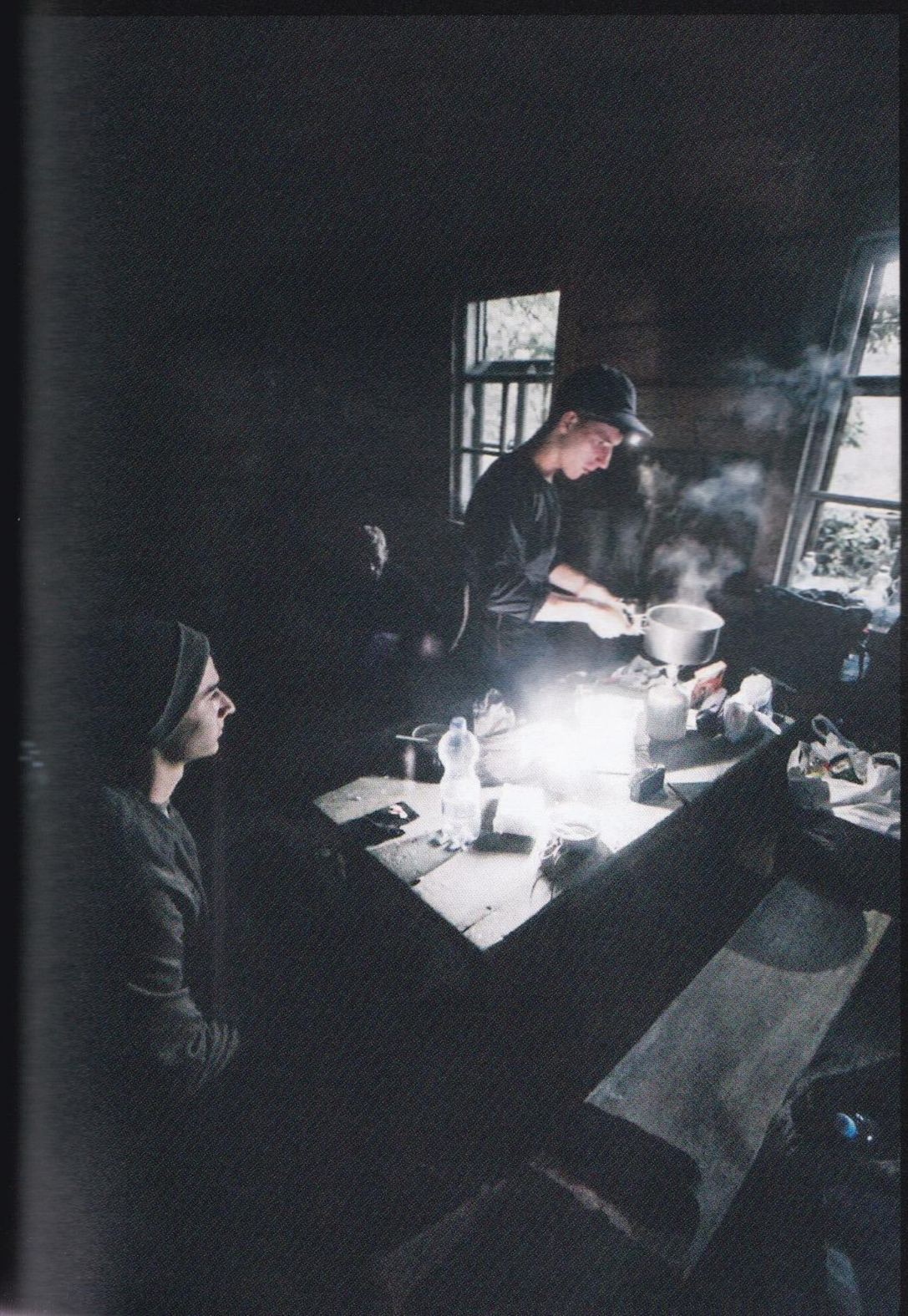
To arrive in Pripyat, the ghost town three miles from Chernobyl that was evacuated 36 hours after the accident, AlekUrbex and Smoare had to cross through rivers, woods and follow railway tracks. "We were exhausted from all the walking, so we did very little parkour. We mainly explored the town and its surroundings," says Alek, looking at his trainers. "These are the same I was wearing. They are good to do parkour but not so good to walk. Not that many miles, anyway." "The hardest part was accepting that we were completely exposed to the radiation and still carry on walking," explains Alek. The others nod. Parkour is their life: a discipline that goes far beyond inner mental and physical limits - and that is what they did in one of the most radioactive zones on the planet.

Traveling from Eindhoven and Bulgaria to Chernobyl, they also time traveled from the 21st century to the reality of a Soviet Bloc nation during the 1980s. It is an untouched zone: everything looks like when it was left by the families that would never come back. There are communist symbols everywhere.

"We thought that after the work of the liquidators there wasn't much more left to do in Chernobyl. Nevertheless, we actually realized that without the Ukrainians studying and safeguarding the place the radioactivity would travel a lot further," said Alek. "It feels like it was ages ago, but it has only been 30 years," says Alek before leaving.

EXCLUSION ZONE

"To avoid some of the guards we had to cross through highly radioactive areas that seriously worried us."



FOLLOW:

@ALEKRAEV
@ROBHOEKX
@YVOBEKX
@NIELJANSBEEKE

PHOTO BY YAHON ERKIN @YAHONERKIN

Born to Run

STORY BY JOE GILBERG @JOETHEGILBERG

Since I began to do parkour and fell in love with all aspects of it, especially parkour videos, I have always known that I wanted to make a solo video that I consider to be awesome. Even outside of being the creator of the video, I wanted to be able to say that it inspired me beyond personal bias so that I know it could inspire others. I knew that if I was going to make something, I had to make it special, or else I wouldn't like it. When thinking of the vision for this "video" over the years, it was always a no brainer that a classic rock song would be the featured track.

My parents raised me on classic rock ever since I was a little kid. We had a local radio station called "102.3 WBAB Long Island's Classic Rock Station." This was pretty much the standard station at all times in the car or at home. I grew up listening to that station, becoming familiar with artists like Led Zeppelin, Aerosmith, Queen, Pink Floyd, Bruce Springsteen, and so, so many others. I fell in love with it. To this day, no other music gives me the feeling that classic rock does. It's pure art. The artist writes every word and every note from start to finish, and nothing is added to help them. No autotune, no pre-recorded beats. The content has epic ups and downs and has to do with deep and important human feelings and experiences. From love to loss, from triumph to failure, from pleasure to disgust, these are the contents of classic rock.

I started going to classic rock concerts at a young age seeing legends perform as they grow old (because you know, they're all getting up there, and I need to see as many as I can). I got a Pink Floyd X The Venture Co. tattoo on my arm because of the effect that classic rock has had on me that no other kind of music has quite measured up to. The raw sound coming only from voice and instruments has a visceral feeling that perfectly encapsulates the feeling of parkour. The beating of the drums, the shredding of the guitar, and the power of the voice capture the feeling of running, vaulting, jumping as you move.

Next, it just came down to which song to pick. My inspiration to pick Bruce Springsteen's "Born to Run" and even the style of the video came from before I ever began to do parkour. It actually came from a time when I did BMX when I was younger. I had a BMX mentor, named Oscar, who sat me down one day to show me this BMX video called "Anthem 2." In it, there was a section from a rider named Brian Yeagle, and the song was, "Born to Run." This part fully blew my little 13-year-old mind. The riding was absolutely insane. Yeagle was so powerful but also technical, and his badass riding paired with the wailing lyrics of Springsteen's "Born to Run" was a match made in heaven. The video inspired me instantly, I must have watched it a thousand times over the years. Yeagle's clear enthusiasm for riding told me just how much he loved what he was doing. He was doing what Bruce was saying in his song, living his dreams, as if he were Born to Run.

Aside from the riding, the style of the video had such a classic, rugged, American feel to it. It is in black and white and has both big beautiful landscape shots as well as tighter and closer tracking shots following Brian perfectly. I would love to kind of shout out the cinematographers involved, but I can't find out who it was anywhere on the internet, so like if anybody knows, hit my line?

So, I ultimately ended up moving on from BMX to parkour which was probably for the best. Honestly, I wasn't very good at BMX, and I fell a lot. I have always loved parkour videos, but I quickly noticed that most parkour videos tend to have either electronic music or hip hop. Not that that's a bad thing, but I have been seriously missing videos that have some classic rock because there really aren't too many. I realized very early on that I wanted to have a classic rock song because it fits for me and I don't really want to do exactly what everybody else is doing in parkour.

Then one day, I watched Brian's Anthem 2 part, and I realized that Born to Run is literally the perfect song for my epic video.

I want this video to have hard-hitting movement as a testament to all the years of hard work I've put into training, and I want others to be compelled to push themselves after watching. I wanted it to be triumphant. Born to Run is perfect for that purpose. I also felt that out of respect to the makers of Anthem 2 and Brian, I had to kind of pay homage in the video. I decided to make the video black and white, and shot in a sort of similar style to Brian's part. Coloring in black and white also worked to serve the dual purpose of Born to Run, which was to use a very American sounding classic rock song to represent how America has been on the up and up terms of parkour over recent years. America, who was once kind of the annoying little brother of parkour, has been pumping out plenty of great athletes who are killing the game.

After I decided on my song, I just had to wait until a time where I felt I was good enough to start gathering clips for this thing. I waited and waited year after year of training. Back after summer 2017, I was feeling close to ready, but then I got injured and was out of training for 7 months total between the injury and some other surgery that I had to get. When I came back to training, my viewpoint was completely different. When I couldn't move the way I wanted to, I gained some real appreciation for my ability to do parkour. I no longer took it for granted, and returning to parkour I just purely enjoyed movement and trained only the kind of stuff that I wanted to. My training benefited incredibly from this. I progressed rapidly, and I began doing some of the best lines I ever had. These became the lines in Born to Run.

If I have any hopes for this video, I hope that it makes the people who watch it feel triumphant. That's how I feel about this video. I hope that others are inspired by this video to push themselves and put the proper time and work into their training, even if it's slow in the beginning. I've been gathering the clips for this video for about a year, and I have really put my all into the thing. I've pushed myself further than ever before since returning from my injury for the lines in this video. This is truly a testament to the progressive nature of parkour, in which if you move at your own pace, pushing yourself each day a little more, you can become a truly skilled athlete. This is the sum of all the years, days, hours that I've put into parkour. I can tell you, when I began doing all this, it was pretty slow in the beginning. I was certainly not naturally talented. It took a lot of time and work.

I want to thank everybody who has helped me and been kind to me on my journey. So many amazing people helped me out with filming this video and cheered me on along the way. Too many to thank individually here, you'll have to watch the video credits for that.

THE LAST OF VANCOUVER

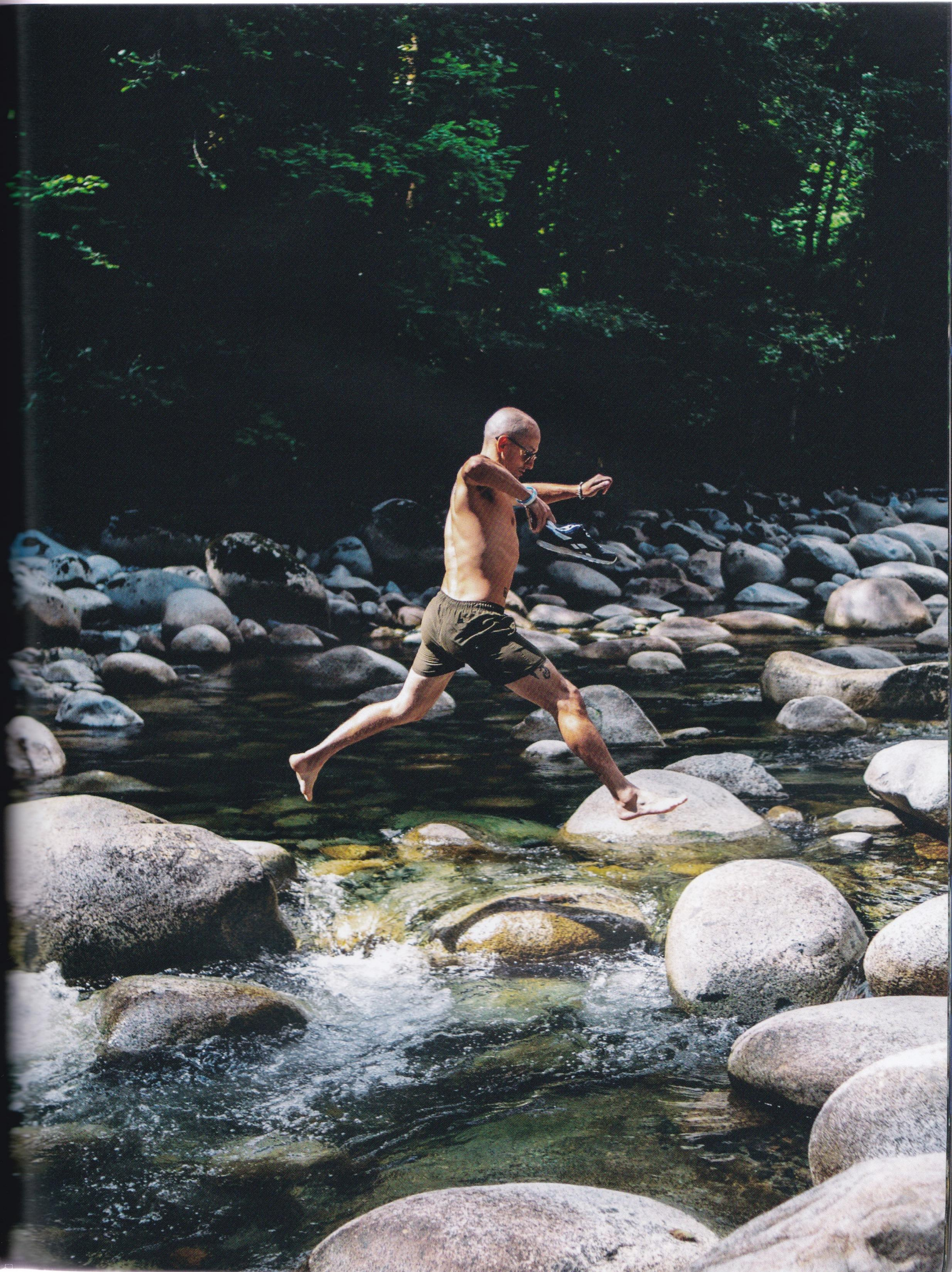
PHOTOS BY TYLER HARDER

LYNN CANYON CALLED AND WE ANSWERED.

LYNN CANYON VANCOUVER, BC, CANADA

The day after the NAPC after-party, everyone was still feeling a little crispy. The cold mountain water of Lynn Canyon was calling our names, and it was the perfect way to spend our last day in Vancouver.

FEATURED - **ERNEST LUBONJA** @POTTI_PHOTOS **DYLAN POLIN** @DYLANPOLIN **BRIAN PRINCE** @TALLTRAININGS
RUBEN CORLAN @RUBENHOPS **JEREMIAH WASHINGTON** @JEREMIAH_FW



PHOTOGRAPHY – **JULIEN BLANC** @JULIENB.VISUALS

FEATURED – **ENDJIS MISCENKO** @MOVEMENDIJS

RUPP

BRIDGING TH
DIFFERENCES

STORY BY NATALIA BOLTUKOVA PHOTOS BY ANDREW OBENREDER JULIEN BLANC

CAN WE BUILD BRIDGES BETWEEN OUR GENDER DIFFERENCES AND UPON OUR SHARED HUMANITY?

Being a sports equivalent of a millennial, parkour is often heralded with standing quite apart from other fitness and athletic disciplines in its progressive inclusiveness and acceptance for all. Is that really so? Can it really claim the gender neutrality crown while the attendance at most mixed-gender jams and gyms is still overwhelmingly male, and the number of "women-only" events, groups, and gear soars? But perhaps more importantly, do parkour practitioners and the parkour community as a whole care for the concept of gender, gender neutrality, and overall inclusiveness? And, if yes or no, then why?

These might seem like redundant or unnecessary questions, but the answers line the belly of the practice of parkour within a community. Unsurprisingly, those answers are complicated because the concept of gender is complex. Instead, gender is used as a handy tool to lump half the people in one category, and the other half in the other, without regard to other social identity ingredients such as age, race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, etc.

In order to understand just how gender works in parkour, we need to understand gender: biologically, psychologically, culturally, and socially. Here's your brief crash course in all of those at once.

BIOLOGICAL GENDER THEORY

Biological gender theory holds that sex dictates gender because of chromosomes and brain development. Seems logical, right? That's why it held for so long, in the mainstream pop logic sense. Also, because "biological" is often synonymous with "intrinsic" and "unchangeable," hence no personal responsibility.

Unfortunately for that theory, human species turn out to be far more diverse biologically than mainstream pop science has it. As in, there are other combinations of chromosome pairs besides the standard XX (female) and XY (male), and on top of those, many other combinations of both genitals and gonads (e.g., one could have a penis and ovaries or a vagina and testicles).

In 1993, Anne-Fausto Sterling, a developmental geneticist, published a mind-blowing paper, arguing that we should recognize at least five sexes, with quasi-infinite variations in between. "Standard medical literature uses the term 'intersex' as a catch-all for three major subgroups with some mixture of male and female characteristics: the so-called true hermaphrodites, whom I call herms, who possess one testis and one ovary (the sperm-and-egg-producing vessels, or gonads); the male pseudohermaphrodites (the 'terms'), who have testes and some aspects of the female genitalia but no ovaries; and the female pseudohermaphrodites (the 'ferms'), who have ovaries and some aspects of the male genitalia but lack testes."

"Imagine a world in which the same knowledge that has enabled medicine to intervene in the management of intersexual patients has been placed at the service of multiple sexualities. Imagine that the sexes have multiplied beyond currently imaginable limits. It would have to be a world of shared powers."

As to the brain, you don't even have to hold a degree in biology to be acquainted with the term "neuroplasticity" (brain's adaptation to environment). Nature versus Nurture has a long history of dialogue. In terms of sex and gender - regardless of your biological expression, your brain is not unchangeable, nor is its development predetermined by the kind of sex you were born with or changed into. Social conditioning, especially by the primary caregivers, would have much more to do with this, but even then not singularly because of sex and gender. If you are a die-hard proponent of this theory, ask yourself: what's at risk for you if that theory fell apart? How does the biological binary (meaning, there exist only two options: female or male) theory play out in parkour?

"Women are biologically and genetically inferior to men when it comes to physical performance." "Guys are always doing just massive, powerful jumps because they are guys." "Women have an advantage [with this movement] because they are naturally more flexible." "Women's parkour is just cartwheels."

Any of that sound familiar? Even if it doesn't apply to your current community, I'm sure you have heard it before or know someone who will nod emphatically at these "gems".

FEATURED - **THAMARA MONROY** @THAMSTASH **ANTONIO DELGADO** @AJOLOTENEGRO

PSYCHOLOGICAL GENDER THEORY

Psychological gender theory breaks up with the “gender is innate” concept but maintains the binary, asserting that gender is formed through cognitive experiences in early childhood, as well as familial relationships. The early Freudian psychoanalyses theories placed huge impact on the importance of girls forming bonds with their mothers and boys with their fathers, and all sorts of “disorders” stemming from lack, absence, or “another-ness” of such bonds, thus heavily maintaining the norms of a binary approach. Simply put, if you were anywhere on the “disorder” line, your diagnosis would likely read as “deeply flawed, broken, and needs to be repaired in order to be a healthy functioning member of society.”

Luckily, these days, psychological research comes up with the similarities hypothesis: “The gender similarities hypothesis holds that males and females are similar on most, but not all, psychological variables. That is, men and women, as well as boys and girls, are more alike than they are different.” Yet, it seems to be an international trend that girls get separated into girls only parkour classes, under the blanket statement that psychologically they are quite different from boys. This is not untrue, to the extent that their cognitive processes are navigated by their adult caregivers with a binary gender bias, who firmly believe in stark differences between male and female psychology. In such a scenario, girls themselves will happily chant, repeating after their mothers: “because girls are better than boys!”, and boys will just as enthusiastically scoff at anything labeled as “female,” all whilst earning an approving pat on the back from their fathers.

The similarities hypothesis is not hugely popular. If we were to structure our communication around the similarities between one another, it would make it inevitable for us to take a closer look at our own “luggage” and - gasp - even take some responsibility for the outcomes of our communications. Why do that if blaming a person who is innately different or, better yet, the “unchangeable” differences themselves displace that responsibility? Easy peasy.

CULTURAL AND SOCIAL PERSPECTIVE

The broad definition of culture as a societal component can be found in many scholar and para-academic papers, and I happen to quite like this one: “[culture is] learned patterns of behaviors and attitudes shared by a group of people.” From the perspective of cultural/social gender theory, gender is a social construct. This means that a society, usually dominated by a select group of people in power, dictates certain behaviors and appearances that a body of a particular sex should perform.

Adherence to these norms structures people’s understanding of themselves and each other. Communication is the process by which this happens, and language is one of its tools. For example, if a culture uses the same word (“female” or “male”) to describe both sex and gender, said culture does not recognize any difference between sex and gender. If a language (Russian, Polish) has only one word for both sex and gender, a member of such culture is given fewer tools to differentiate between sex and gender, let alone express a gender that differs from their sex. If a culture has started as male-only and has taken a male-dominated course of development, can it claim to be fluent in both “male” and “female”, linguistically and physically? Can it break free from gender altogether, learn to speak “gender-neutral” and avoid the fate of the restroom (I’m referring to people feeling “unsafe”)?

Parkour is a culture and a mini-society. Do we, as parkour practitioners and aficionados, share a set of behaviors and attitudes that define us as a parkour group? Can I get a sound “Preeeaaaach!!”? Not only do we have those, but we carry that identification with unmistakable and not-so-seldom over-exuberant pride. We are the woke Illuminati of the global society, most members of which are still chained to their desks, devices, and daily drudgery. Did I spend a few minutes looking up synonyms to “boring mundane work” that start with “D”? Oh, hell yes I did.

Having sniffed the sweet Kool-Aid smell of parkour gospel, I can’t deny there is some truth to the “woke Illuminati” part, but have we taken the time to think about the “how” and the “why” of our “breaking the wheel”? Apologies to you Game of Thrones nonconformists, you’ll just have to look that one up.

As parkour practitioners, we often hear and say, “Parkour is for everyone.” It’s one of the few mantras that is bound to get you a sound equivalent of “Amen!” from about any solid parkour community. It’s a broad enough statement that it can be true. Parkour, as a movement and philosophical practice, is for everyone. Parkour culture is not. If a culture has started as male-only and has taken a male-dominated course of development, can it claim to be fluent in both “male” and “female”, linguistically and physically? Can it break free from gender altogether, learn to speak “gender-neutral” and avoid the fate of the restroom?

GENDER AS A SOCIAL CONSTRUCT, AND OWNING OUR RESPONSIBILITY

Back to gender as a social construct. It's an important term. Social construct means that our gender is not intrinsic, not unchangeable, and not fixed. It means freedom to choose how to express our gender or to not express it at all, at any given point in time. Such freedom comes at a price by the name of "responsibility." It means taking responsibility for how and why we choose to express our gender, to express ourselves, with all the consequences henceforth. It means we don't get to blame our nature, our parents, higher power, or whoever and whatever else, for...anything. Imagine that. You. Your choices. Your responsibility.

It doesn't mean that we must "blame" ourselves. What it does mean is understanding and taking charge of our internal workings. That's where personal internal work comes into play. If and when we desire full agency over our lives, we must look inwards, resolve the unresolved, heal the wounds, and grow. Along this process, it is inevitable that we become more compassionate and empathetic, through the realization that in order to grow, we all go through this process.

We all share humanity. With that in mind, gender is irrelevant. However, it appears to be extremely relevant when we perform our social roles in society.

HISTORY OF GENDER AND FEMINISM IN SPORTS

In all honesty, part of me just wanted to nod emphatically to Chris McDougall's "sports were created by men, for men, to show off what men do best", so what's there to research, and call that a day. That would be nice, but it's a tad more complicated than that. To better understand how we continue to fulfill societal norms in parkour, some to a greater, some to a lesser extent, let's take a quick look where we are at as a more global society, at least in the U.S., and where we've come from.

At its core, organized sport is a leisure activity, and became more widespread and diverse in the U.S. roughly in the middle of the 19th century. However, it was limited to men and was the very definition and exercise of masculinity. "Frail femmes" were advised to save the energy for reproduction and further care of the offspring. True story. In those dark ages, a woman's body didn't even belong to her. Unthinkable, I know.

Sidenote: that stratagem applied to the white middle to upper-class people, who could afford, or aspired to one day be able to afford, the luxury of a "leisure" activity. The story of females of color, of lower-class, from different cultures, is somewhat different, which sometimes meant more evident participation in a sport, albeit a sport less recognized as a legitimate sport.

Since the early 1920s, every wave of feminism (there are currently four) has opened more opportunities for women to practice sport. Isn't that great? Again, not that simple. Welcome to the unevenness of social change.

First wave (1920s), characterized by women's suffrage (the right to vote), met a backlash and opposition that brought back the Hard Essentialism that characterized the largely post-war, post-survival "Time Before Feminism," and is founded on intrinsic binary division, putting women "back where they belong: home-kitchen-children". Hence, participation in sports was very limited and divisive: there was a distinct line between male sports and female sports. "Nothing too strenuous, definitely not something that could potentially make a female body look even remotely masculine (athletic)."

Second wave (1970s) aimed to increase equality, equal pay being one of them, and also produced Title IX, a federal law in the Education Amendments Act that states: "No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance." Progress, but again, not that simple. Despite it being a law, Title IX was met with great resistance from the male-dominated sport organization structure and was challenged multiple times at all levels of governance, from presidential administration to public schools.

However, it did open doors for girls and women to get into more sports in schools and colleges, increasing the number of females in athletics. Still, the division persisted: male baseball and female softball, separate gender soccer teams, and occasional lone female on a football field as an anomaly. In terms of gender ideologies, this is an example of Soft Essentialism: it supports the binary division but recognizes and addresses the power dynamic between genders by providing more options for the suppressed group.

Anything sounds familiar at all? Remember I asked you to hold a thought for a second? Separate parkour classes for girls and boys? Separate women's only events, classes, and community? Yeah, about that. The 1970s, people.

What's so wrong with that? If more women are participating, that's good, right?

So glad you asked. First of all, it's never just "good" or "bad," even if, in some unreal reality, we all operated within the same definition of "good" and "bad." Forget even linguistic differences. Second, keeping the status quo of the binary division, boys versus girls, and who has more power is not at all as progressive as it may seem. Again, hold that thought. You know the drill.

Third wave (1990's) - radical anti-categorical, anti-essentialist view of gender (meaning, this view accepts gender as a social construct, and thus a changeable identifier which one does, not has) which stands at the intersection with other identity ingredients such as race, religion, age, nationality, socio-economic status. "…how limiting it is to even try to think about gender simply and categorically as being about boys and girls, men and women: race, social class, national origin, and the recent emergence of transgender people complicate and enrich our understandings of gender relations in sports."

While I've got no massive examples of this a-blazing in the parkour community, there are some that stand out to me amidst all the segregation, however well-intended. A couple of them that I feel compelled to mention is as follows:

Women's North American Parkour Gathering, which is now making a conscious effort every year to open up the second day of the Gathering weekend to all genders, promoting the values of good communication and mutual respect among people of all genders and other social identifiers.

Then we have Denmark, Street Movement, specifically. In my four consecutive months there, training, playing, studying, exploring, I have felt the most "equal" to all the people around me, and I have witnessed said equality among them. I wonder if it has to do with Nordic/Scandinavian culture altogether, which brings me to the next example.

Edinburgh Parkour community, which I have experienced consistently over the months of working, training, and living among its members. I can't really say that gender was not a thing. It was significantly less of a thing, enough to stand out, especially in the country where the line between "female" and "male" is drawn so distinctly and is enforced with the blind diligence of a culture that holds tradition above everything else, often for the sake of the tradition itself, despite its expiration date long gone. But then again, Scotland never misses a chance to exercise its independence (to the point that the majority of Scottish respondents to my Inter-Gender survey stated that they were from Scotland, not from the UK).

I am sure there are other communities and events that uphold similar values and do their best to address gender issues. I think it's extremely important to understand the full extent and the end goal, as well as side effects, of any method of addressing gender issues. And it's my personal experience as a national and international coach and practitioner, that those examples are rare.

Fourth wave (2008- p.t.) - mostly focused on women's empowerment and social media. If you have seen or uploaded videos, memes, photos, stories, posts online, that are accompanied by hashtags #thisgirlcan #girlparkour #jumplikeagirl, etc., then you have witnessed and partook in the fourth wave.

Interestingly, while it is progress, manifested by the apparent uprise of suppressed groups who are collectively and individually inspiring each other over social media, it is also not progress because it maintains the gender binary (female versus male, us versus them, I'm right versus you're wrong) and the unchallenged status quo of male hegemony. As in: let's re-define "female" and "femininity," but keep "male" and "masculinity" intact. Because hegemony.

Just to be clear, in my opinion, disempowerment does not equal re-definition. Replacing one group with another while maintaining the same hegemonic system will not get rid of our societal gender issues.

GENDER IN PARKOUR

It's time to use this background knowledge to look at parkour. While it is true that the Soft Essentialism approach plays a beneficial part in growing the numbers of females participating in parkour as a sport discipline, it is also simultaneously responsible for growing the gap between the two genders and reinforcing the binary view. This is evidenced by the popularity of exclusively female training groups, events, and classes, and a strong online presence of female practitioners building a distinct female parkour culture. A lot of female groups are very open to including female-identifying and non-binary people. I just don't think we can be true to ourselves to expand the category to include other genders besides female, but keep the same name (female).

Any gender ideology approach that is based on differences between genders, instead of commonalities, continues to fuel the same war that has been going on for centuries and led to many real wars: us versus them. Any gender ideology approach that is based on differences continues to use the language and communication that propagates differences.

Shall we look at differences? And maybe then at commonalities?

PHYSICAL INEQUALITY

Ahhh, a personal favorite. "Females are intrinsically weaker than males."

This statement works wonderfully in favor of male hegemony. Both genders partake in maintaining this stereotype, from "knight in shining armor" to "evil oppressor," from "fragile flower" to "flower power, but only among other flowers."

I can imagine some objections from many of you. That's great. It's even better if you actually believe that the statement above is not true. But like with this whole article, it's not just about you. It's about all of us, regardless of gender. And if all of us disagreed with that statement, we wouldn't be talking about gender issues.

It is worth considering that female exclusion from participation in sports for centuries has hypothetically contributed to physio-biological and alleged genetic predisposition toward a "weaker" physical performance. If that statement is or could be true, it could be inferred that the same quality of such social programming, namely, its plasticity, can be effective in a reverse mode. If we create a female stereotype that is physically equal with the male stereotype, or rather, is not dependent on comparison, it is not unthinkable that over time it would manifest itself in its physio-biological and implied genetic predisposition.

If you think this is a novel thought, let me bring you back to 1895. Below is a quote from Edwin Checkley's "A Natural Method Of Physical Training":

"If women must, as is so freely complained, remain physically short of man's strength, there is no reason why the disparity should remain so great as it often is. Where women lead an active life, their strength and endurance come remarkably close to the strength and endurance of the other sex, and in the control of their own systems may readily under development excel the other sex. In other words, tradition has more to do with the 'weakness' of women than has nature."

MENTAL INEQUALITY

Physical inequality leads to mental inequality. The relation between physical and mental is anything but under-stressed in parkour. It is then unsurprising to witness the link many infer between differences in physical movement in females versus males and their respective mindsets and mental processes.

“Stop overthinking.”
“Just go for it.”
“Women are way more cautious.”
“Women are less likely to take risk.”
“Their massive jump fest is just a demonstration of their massive ego.”

Assumptions like these serve two purposes. First, they dismiss the unique individual differences both in physical movement and mental processes and expression and assign “class” values to individuals who may not necessarily have them. And second, they enforce a particular stereotypical behavior, so that individuals conform to the societal norms. The price for not conforming to the norms is usually a varying degree of non-acceptance of such an individual in said society.

COMMUNICATION AND GENDER EXPRESSION

Are there differences between people of different genders in the way they communicate, through verbal or body language? Through the way they dress, behave in public spaces, behave in private spaces?

Are there differences between people of different genders in the way they perform their gender in movement, in parkour? At a big jam, at a small class, in a private session, solo training?

Gender does not create communication, communication creates gender. Substitute “gender” for any other social identifier - race, ethnicity, age, social status - it still works like magic. A pull-up by a male creates a different reaction than a pull-up by a female. Wearing a loose shirt, wearing a tight shirt, wearing no shirt - creates a variety of reactions

INTER-GENDER COMMUNICATION SURVEY AND RESULTS

In winter 2019, I put out a survey titled Inter-Gender Communication in Climbing and Parkour. One thing I wanted to avoid was gender-bias in my questions, and I took multiple steps to minimize the potential for bias, including running questions by individuals of different gender convictions. Whether I succeeded or not, you be the judge. Unfortunately, most of the times when “gender” is discussed, it more often than not ends up being about “female,” “feminism,” and “female oppression,” and it began affecting our interpretation of the word “gender.” Not that it’s not an important topic, but “gender” does not equal just “female.”

We have all heard about the need to “empower” women and provide them with “safety.” Do we all have the same understanding of what those terms mean? Have we asked what males need? What people of other genders need?

Which is why I wanted to open up discussion of such terms as “empowerment” and “triggers” to all genders. A hundred responders from around the world answered questions such as “What are your verbal and non-verbal communication triggers in parkour/climbing environment?” and “Do you feel the need to be empowered?”, among others.

Most questions had a double goal: to trace any common patterns in answers, identifying similarities and differences among all genders, and to offer a gateway for the responder to look deeper inwards, to question oneself: “what does ‘power’ in ‘empowerment’ mean to me, and why?”, and “Can I take personal responsibility for a strong reaction I may have to this or another question?”

Going through the answers (most answers were freeform; multiple choice, while easier to quantify responses, often creates cognitive framing bias and greater potential for the question to pre-determine the answer), it turned out that common communication triggers in context of parkour and climbing training, shared by all the responders regardless of their gender (meaning, the gender distribution was roughly equal among 42 females, 6 non-binary individuals, and 52 males), were:

• Monopolizing training space (one person or a few folks occupying the space without regard to other practitioners, especially those of “lower” skill level or working on not so eye-catching movement)

• Not being acknowledged (a “hello,” a friendly nod and a wave, introducing oneself, being considerate of the training “line” and space)

• Given unsolicited coaching advice (turns out, very few people welcome the “let me tell you how to do this” type of advice when it was not asked for)

• Hearing about the ability or inability to perform a movement as a direct and intrinsic consequence of being a certain gender (“you could only do this because you’re [insert gender]”, “I could never do this because I am [insert gender]”)

Triggers that mostly just male participants mentioned (meaning 1 female and 0 non-binary persons shared the same opinion):

• “I have not experienced any”
• Aggressive behavior

Triggers that mostly just female participants mentioned:

• Too much attention (over-spotting or over-praising, mostly coming from males who don’t spot and praise other males to the same extent). Respondents felt that it led to them feeling not included and not belonging.

• Being stared at.

Triggers that mostly non-binary people shared:

• Assumed gender or gendered incorrectly

• Assumed sexual motives when looking at someone to figure out movement (compare with “Being stared at” above).

Triggers, highlighted above, directly corresponded with the responders’ understanding of “respect,” regardless of gender - another question that asked for a freeform response. Therefore, in order to make our communication better and truly inclusive of all people, a few things seem to need to happen (pre-requisites in the parenthesis):

1.) Understanding what respect means for you (self-love, self-compassion, boundaries)

2.) Understanding what respect means for your interlocutor (empathy and compassion)

3.) Openness and understanding that the two definitions may be different (empathy, compassion, and boundaries)

4.) Ability to communicate respect verbally and non-verbally (self-love, self-compassion, compassion, empathy, boundaries)

In reality, these four steps prove to be really, really hard to execute fluidly. In reality, it looks like stumbling, stutter-stepping, falling, bailing, getting frustrated, and hitting all the corners, destroying the shins all the while. In reality, a lot of us want a quick (sometimes mistaken for "efficient") fix: just do this or don't do that, and you're all set. In reality, everything in the parenthesis above requires hard, focused, consistent personal work. This is the emotional literacy equivalent of parkour balance, quadrupedal, squats, jumping technique, landing, body proprioception, etc.

This work can take a form of counseling, therapy, journaling, self-therapy, shadow work, relational work, physical theater, etc.

Hard, focused, consistent work. Not unlike how we train parkour.

If we apply our parkour training methods to our internal personal work (Kasturi Torchia, Chris Grant, Nancy Lorenz among a few others who have been doing brilliant work in that direction), we are bound to reap mental and emotional benefits similar to the physical ones we gain through our training. And we are bound to challenge and change societal norms, some of which pertain to gender, which are based on differences and on the "power over" of one group over another, and move toward the structure that recognizes the uniqueness of each individual along with one-ness and shared humanity as interlinked and inseparable qualities of any human being. A structure that is based on "power to" instead of "power over."

Change without starts with the change within.

I want to leave you with a recent story that made me reflect on the process of social change.

During the discussion on this very topic at the Art of Retreat in Scotland this past April, a female practitioner and coach commented: "You're saying that gender is a social construct and I am free to choose how to express it. But I find that in order to keep my job, and in order to be able to do my job, I have to use gender stereotypes".

I would like to answer that with a story, which highlights communication.

I decided to bounce some gender-in-communication ideas with Marcus Udsen Grandjean, a Danish parkour and movement coach, meditation guide, and a perpetual learner. Marcus lamented the overblown value we place on words, instead of looking at intention and the essence of that is being said. I agreed, but also disagreed.

I think we should indeed look for the intention behind the words, but at the same time, we must try to express ourselves with the utmost clarity, taking into consideration the understanding we have of ourselves and others. Message sent is not always the message received, or in other words, what a speaker tries to say is not always the same thing that the recipient hears. Sloppy use of language and careless word choice and intonation often only makes it worse.

(Sidenote: it's not uncommon to be more forgiving toward a non-native speaker or a person from another culture.)

How does this story tie into the comment above? In my opinion, after we realize the necessity of internal personal work after we make conscious choices about our life and lifestyle and how we express them, we must also be always cognizant of the fact that everyone is at a different point in their journey. There are many "truths." That means that sometimes we will have to have uncomfortable conversations, and there will be times when we will have to postpone them. There will be times when we choose to assert our values, and there will be times when we will have to compromise in order to make a larger statement overall or later.

I don't know this person's specific work situation. I don't have a piece of specific advice. I do know that change is never easy, especially when it threatens our view of the world and the way we make sense of it. Categorizing, gender being one of such categories, is one of the ways we make sense of the world. I do think that it will have to be a slow and often a painstaking process rather than a revolution, in order to have us evolve to a point where, to paraphrase a brilliant mind, it's more important what's between your ears, than what's between your legs.

SUGGESTED:

Catherine Helen Palczewski, Danielle D. McGeough, and Victoria Pruin DeFrancisco. Gender in Communication: A Critical Introduction. 2013.

No Slam Dunk: Gender, Sport and the Unevenness of Social Change. Cheryl Cooky and Michael Messner. 2018

Same Difference: How Gender Myths Are Hurting Our Relationships, Our Children, and Our Jobs. Rosalind Barnett. 2005

Marshall Rosenberg. Nonviolent Communication. 1999.

Inter-Gender Communication in Climbing and Parkour - Survey

The Gifts of Imperfection, by Brené Brown

Self-Therapy, by Jay Early

The Mankind Project

Shadow Work Seminars, Inc.

The Book of Forgiveness, by Desmond Tutu + Mpho Tutu

I am not your Guru - Tony Robbins (Netflix film)

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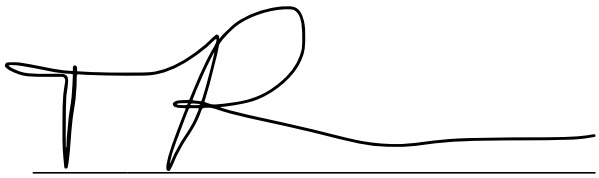

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